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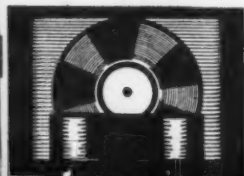
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THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

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Editorial Notes

ONE wonders why the Nazis must drag politics into art; why particularly music, perhaps the greatest of all arts, should be subjected to censorship. The latest instance of the Nazi purge of music leaves one heartsick. From an article entitled *Paris—By Grace of Goering* in the January-February issue of *Modern Music*, we learn that the Opéra has been forbidden to dip into the German repertory, especially the works of Wagner. Further, that "authorization to play German works has also been rigorously refused the symphonic associations, and in fact, French ensembles and artists are forbidden to perform any of the works of belligerent countries . . . these are being reserved for the German and Italian orchestras and soloists . . ." All Jewish musicians have been removed from their posts. The celebrated harpsichordist, Wanda Landowska (of Polish extraction), has had to flee Paris, abandoning her manuscripts, her vast collection of music, and her instruments. The racial situation extends itself to recorded music. Thus we read: "the Germans are so rigorously applying this principle that they have ordered the complete catalogues of all phonograph records made by Paris firms (Pathé, Columbia, Voix de son maitre, Polydor) to be turned over to them, and they have confiscated and destroyed not only the records but even the matrices of recordings by Jewish artists, including those by Yehudi Menuhin and Fritz Kreisler."

Politics and art should be far removed from each other. All good music should be accessible to everyone. If it is performed better by German artists than by English or American artists, or vice versa, we should be willing to applaud the finer performance. It was not because we were pushing politics in music that we mentioned last month that the royalties accruing from the sale of the Furtwängler performance of Tschaiakowsky's *Pathétique Symphony* went to England, but because

(Continued on page 242)

Some Needed Piano Recordings

Harold C. Shonberg

IN Heaven, perhaps, where all things are perfect, the ardent record collector may at last be at peace. But this is earth, where perfection is not. Thus he must be thankful for what he has, for, conditions being what they are, he may not have it long. I, for one, have little against the recording companies—usually; and I am impatient with those who deplore the lack of good recorded music. Anyone with any initiative can find an enormous amount of the best in music (as well as many novelties) in the domestic catalogues. If everything is not there, it should be remembered that companies must make money on best sellers in order to fill their catalogues with better music that loses money. Therefore, I am happy to see a new disc by Nelson Eddy, or Leopold Stokowski, or Lily Pons, for they are the indirect sponsors of composers like Vivaldi, Rameau, or Schumann—composers who in most cases are represented on records only because *The Rosary* or *The Indian Love Call* made enough money to put them there. Still, one can indulge in a little wishful thinking about what should be in the ideal catalogue, or about things that sadly need re-recording. Nor need one be highly esoteric in his thoughts. Composers have been composing industriously, even recklessly, for some hundreds of years, and their output is so extensive that one can cite masterpiece after masterpiece without playing hide-and-seek in obscure realms of music. Indeed, one can profitably confine oneself to a small segment, as I shall do here with piano music.

To begin with, there is Bach. When a music lover thinks of Bach and piano music the 48 Preludes and Fugues that make up the *Well Tempered Clavier* immediately come to mind. In the catalogues are found Edwin Fischer's recording of Nos. 35-48, Harriet Cohen's version of the first nine, and various single discs by other pianists. Fischer's performances are good, but most

of the others are old and not too well played. That leaves Nos. 1 to 34 open to recording and re-recording. On the virtues of the music there is, of course, no need to dwell. A large part of our day-dreaming hours is devoted to the possibility of Landowska doing the "48" on the harpsichord, or perhaps a complete piano recording by Petri or Gieseking (two dissimilar styles of pianism, I must admit; but both artists would do wonderful work). Another series of Bach compositions that should be recorded is the *Two and Three Part Inventions*. Surely many pianists would buy them, for they are an indispensable part of the repertoire. Consider too the six *Partitas* (only three of which have been recorded), the *English Suites* (five of which should be recorded) and the *French Suites* (of which there is no recorded example except Landowska's *Sixth*).

Mozart composed nineteen piano sonatas. A good number have been recorded, but few—no more than six—are available domestically. Some of the unrecorded ones are very lovely; I don't understand how K. 333 in B flat has missed Columbia's or Victor's attention. Another sonata worthy of recording is the contrapuntal one in F, K. 533. Among the rest not all are typical of the greater Mozart, but if K. 309, 310, and 330 were added to the above, with a pianist like Robert Goldsand (who quickly should be seized by the recording companies) as soloist, there would be many happier moments in a collector's life. Another blessed occasion would be the arrival of some of the hitherto unrecorded concertos. I warmly recommend any of those after K. 281.

Considering the relative unpopularity of the Mozart sonatas, it is understandable that many are passed by. But how many of Beethoven's thirty-two are available in modern recording? The *Pathétique*, *Moonlight* and *Appassionata*, of course; the *D*

minor, Op. 31, the *Waldstein*, the *F sharp*, Op. 78, and Opp. 90, 101, 106, and 111. Curiously the last sonatas are those that predominate. Schnabel's society sets are complete but expensive and almost impossible to obtain now. Besides, in the opinion of many (myself included), Schnabel is by no means the ideal pianist to record the Beethoven sonatas. Not that there is a shining model for pianists to aspire to; indeed, because of the emotional diversity of the music, I feel that no single pianist should undertake a complete cycle but that the work should be divided: Petri or Rachmaninoff for the later ones, say; Bauer or Gieseke for the earlier ones. If the companies are feeling ambitious they need look no further afield than the *Diabelli Variations*. If they are not feeling so ambitious there are always the *Ecossaises*, which Brailowsky plays so deliciously; the little dances would provide a pleasant single disc.

Schumann has been treated rather shabbily by the recorders. In the current Columbia catalogue the only piano works are the *Concerto* and the *Etudes Symphoniques*. Very few composers have written so great an amount of beautiful piano music, and the public does not know what it is missing as long as the *Novelettes*, *Nachtstücke*, or *F sharp minor Sonata* remain unrecorded. I also should like—this is personal—a new recording of the great *Fantasy in C*. The fairly recent Bachaus is to me angular, too sharply played, and generally unconvincing. Perhaps I am spoiled by the memory of Gabrilowitsch's outstanding performance; however, an artist like Moiseiwitch could supply a memorable interpretation of the *Fantasy*, as well as of the *Abegg Variations*, *Paganini Caprices*, *Intermezzi*, *Blumenstück*, *Romances*, or *Presto passionato*. And may I mention once more the need of a recording of the beautiful two-piano *Andante and Variations*?

Two other Romantics, Mendelssohn and Chopin, figure more or less prominently in the catalogues. With Mendelssohn it is rather less than more, and perhaps fairly so. Still, one would welcome a recording of the *Capriccio brillante*, some of the *études*, and the *Prelude and Fugue in E minor*. Most of Chopin is obtainable. There

is, however, a crying need for an up-to-date recording of the Op. 25 *Etudes*, performed, perhaps, by Lhevinne. Other works should be re-recorded. Many believe that Chopin's greatest work is the *F minor Fantasy*; the Cortot and Long versions are greatly outdated. We also need new releases of the four *Impromptus* and the four *Balades*, all of which are in Artur Rubinstein's rightful domain. Then there is much Chopin that would provide single discs—the *Tarantelle* (Cortot's recording is very old), the *La ci darem* variations (never recorded) and, above all, the *Barcarolle* (I have heard both Lhevinne and Brailowsky do wonders with this long and superb composition).

With Liszt we come to a composer whose piano contributions have never been fully represented by the domestic companies. Without going into the eternal argument concerning Liszt as a composer, there is no doubt that he wrote the most effective and glittering music that has ever been written for the piano. One can decry his sentiment and may look askance at the musical values, but one must have an asbestos-lined heart not to glow in the midst of the Lisztian pyrotechnics. Perhaps one must be a true connoisseur of the piano to derive full enjoyment from this music, and it does take a great pianist to play the music with the requisite aplomb and splendor, but with that artist available Liszt can reach heights of magnificence. I would like to hear Horowitz or Barer in some of the less-played rhapsodies (the Borovsky cycle on Decca-Polydor is inadequate). And here is something that could easily be a popular set: the *Paganini Studies*. Two of these, *La Campanella* and *La Chasse* are often performed; the rest are seldom heard. Yet they are among the most exciting and exacting pieces in the entire repertoire. I should also like to hear one of our fabulous technicians—Horowitz, Brailowsky, Barer, Hofmann, Rubinstein, etc. etc.—attempt the 12 *Etudes d'exécution transcendante*. It is surprising, too, that the *Mephisto Waltz*, which is so popular in the concert hall, has never been recorded here as a piano solo.

Among the contemporaries of Brahms there are many lesser composers who wrote

piano music worthy of recording. Dvorak, for example, wrote a charming piano concerto that I would love to have in my collection, and the original four-hand version of the *Slavonic Dances* would be enjoyable. Smetana composed a set of *Polkas* that many would cherish. Moskowski's pretty piano concerto would be welcome as a change from more serious fare, as would the Chaminade *Autrefois*. There is some first-rate music in the Grieg *Ballade*, Op. 24 (the old Godowsky recording has been withdrawn by Columbia), and much of Grieg's piano music would bear recording—not in large doses, however. Rubinstein's *D minor Concerto* as played by Hofmann is needed to fill in the standard concerto list. Of Saint-Saëns I remember a sparkling *Toccata*, played by Jeanne-Marie Darré on an old H.M.V. record, that would provide a brilliant vehicle for a Sanromá or Horowitz. And I am sure that the public would like much more of Fauré's piano music than is available.

From Debussy on there is so much unrecorded piano music that one does not know where to begin. The Spanish school could be more prominently represented: Rubinstein or Copeland could record some of the works of Albeniz (a complete recording of *Iberia*), Falla (when shall we have a decent recording of *Pièces espagnoles?*), and Granados (a complete *Goyescas*). The Russian composers have written much excellent music for piano, and I would like to mention Prokofieff's short and snappy *Second Sonata* and Shostakovich's equally short and snappy *Concerto*. Godowsky the cosmopolitan composed tremendous amounts of piano music, the importance of which is equalled only by its difficulties. Selections from *Triakontameron* might not be amiss, and a pianist with a flair for showmanship and an unlimited technique would provide some hair-raising discs in a performance of some of the astounding paraphrases on the Chopin *Etudes*. Petri should be the pianist in a performance of Busoni's concerto or *Fantasia contrappuntistica*. Most of the Ravel *Miroirs* are unrecorded, as are the *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, while the piano concerto (not the one for the left hand) should be re-recorded. There might be an

audience for D'Indy's piano sonata; there certainly would be one for the witty and clever pieces by Poulenc, Milhaud and Francaix. And so on . . . This list could be prolonged indefinitely. Readers who have their own favorites will add them to the compilation and dream along with me.

* * *

Last month we received Albert Lockwood's *Notes on the Literature of the Piano*, and leafing through it we encountered many selections that might well be included in the above list. For instance, there are many American piano works that should be recorded. Of MacDowell might be suggested the *A minor Concerto*, one of the four sonatas, or some of the etudes. Charles T. Griffes' *Four Roman Sketches* (*The White Peacock*, *Nightfall*, *The Fountains of Acqua Paola*, and *Clouds*) are atmospheric pieces that would make a charming album. Many of the impressionistic miniatures by Marion Bauer deserve recording. The *Concord Sonata* by Charles Ives was a musical sensation several seasons ago, and there is no reason why John Kirkpatrick, who introduced it, should not be allowed to preserve his interpretation on wax. Lockwood mentions a concerto by Sowerby, works by Schelling and Hill, Loeffler's *Pagan Poem*, and the Carpenter *Concertino*. One might add the two concertos by Anis Fuleihan. I am not acquainted with most of these, but perhaps a recording of one or two might be an excellent contribution. To keep these suggestions all-American, it would be fitting if an artist like Harrison Potter, Abram Chasins, or Frank Sheridan be the pianist.

Turning again to European music, I should like to mention Arensky's piano concerto and the *Sketches on Forgotten Rhythms*, which Lockwood calls individual and unusual. Arnold Bax has written much piano music, including three fine sonatas. Among other British contributions might be mentioned some of the Frank Bridge miniatures, Delius' concerto, Goossens' *Nature Poems*, Walton's *Sinfonia concertante*, Vaughan Williams' concerto, and Holst's *Toccata on a Northumbrian Tune*. Ernst von Dohnanyi should by all means be included: his *Etudes*, *Variations on a*

Hungarian Theme, and *Ruralia Hungarica* rank high among contemporary works. Godowsky's *Triakontameron* has already been mentioned; equally enjoyable are the *Walzermasken*, a collection of 24 pieces in waltz rhythm. Since the composer was constantly revising them it would be well if his pupil and life-long associate, Vera Aronson, were to be the artist chosen.

Among forgotten concertos Lockwood mentions those by Alkan, Henselt, Scriabin, Hummel and Sinding. I dimly recollect having heard the last two; I do not believe that audiences will swoon in rapture over them, but many might find them interesting novelties. The same is true of Rubinstein's *Fifth Concerto*. Curiously, Lock-

wood makes no mention of the many works by Gottschalk, some of which should be rescued from oblivion. And finally my mind continually keeps reverting to Charles Henri Alkan's *Bombardo Carillon*, for armless pianists (four feet on the pedal piano). Lockwood cautiously states "it is safe to say that this is the only piece of its kind in existence." Now here is *the* unique work in the annals of piano composition. Too, it would serve as a perfect vehicle for certain pianists who give the impression of playing with their feet—pianists who would doubtless be perfectly at home in this kind of music, where, for the first time, an outlet would be provided for their peculiar qualifications.

Hugo Wolf On Records

IV

Philip L. Miller

Dass *doch gemalt* deserves a book to itself as one of the greatest little things in music. Here the lover wishes that a heathen prince would find a painting of the beloved which could be built into a monument, so that everyone in the kingdom, on seeing it, would be converted to Christianity and to love. Surely Wolf's contribution is the very perfection of word-setting and of mood-setting—a musical mirror of the poet's thought—yet how characteristically Wolfian it all is! Things like the melodic fall at the words *und liegte seine Kron' in deine Hände*—suggesting a bow of homage—or the mighty proclamation *Christ soll ein jeder werden* and the instantaneous softening on *und dich lieben*, or again the indecision of the bass figure under *Ein jeder Heiden flugs bekehrte sich*, the instant of hesitation on the augmented chord, and then the surrender to B-flat major and the perfectly simple ending—such things are the products of sheer and apparently uncalculat-

ing genius. Of the three recordings I very much prefer the *Schlussus* (Brunswick 85010). Because of its greater ease and brilliance his singing is more powerful than that of either Hüscher (Vol. 4) or Schmitt-Walter (Telefunken A 2541). It has more bite, and a greater effect of drive from the first note to the inevitable last. Both the other gentlemen benefit by later recording, but both sound a little tame in comparison. At one point, however, I prefer Hanns Udo Müller, who plays for Hüscher, to *Schlussus'* admirable Rupp: it is the point of the conversion mentioned above. He seems to make the change just a little clearer.

Du denkst mit einem Fädchen is a charmingly arch and light-textured miniature, in which a young signorina declares that she will not be held by a single thread of affection. The better of the two recordings is that of Gerhardt in Vol. 1, although here again a more youthful voice would be preferable. She sings the song to perfec-

tion for all that, which is more than can be said for Lotte Lehmann, whose recording, besides being mechanically not very pleasant, is too obviously on the coy side (Victor 1860, M-419).

Wie lange schon strikes a new and unexpected note. A very young girl wishes the Lord would send her a man—preferably a musician who would play the violin for her. Until the final line is reached the song is a serious one, and the effect of the unexpected evidence of youth is something between laughter and tears. One would hardly have expected Elisabeth Rethberg to realize so perfectly the humor of this song as she does in Vol. 4. Vocally the performance is a delight, and the piano part with its postlude imitative of the lover's playing, is marvelously done by Mr. Bos. *Nein, junger Herr* is another arch song. This time the lady tells her occasional suitor that if she is not good enough for every day she will not play the game at all. Remarks similar to those I made on the last Gerhardt song, which is on the same record side in Vol. 1, apply here. *Hoffartig seid Ihr* presents again the masculine side. "If you insist on being haughty—if you will not love—then take my contempt!" The Hüsch recording in Vol. 4 is a nearly perfect one.

A Bit of Boccaccio

Geselle, woll'n wir uns in Kutten büllen is a still different type of song. Two friends, for a prank, dress up as monks and go from door to door begging alms. But they end by hearing the confession of a dying girl. Surely this is something from Boccaccio. Kipnis realizes its surface seriousness, and aside from the usual blots on his singing, his performance is a fine one (Vol. 4). *Mein Liebster ist so klein* has long since won a place in the affections of many concert sopranos. It is a preposterous picture of a lover who is so small that his hair sweeps the floor as he walks, and his ladylove has to bend down to kiss him. The little accompanying figure is amusing, since it has served both Wolf and Schubert before—Wolf in the radiant and fragile *Blumengruss* and Schubert in the wise and sinister *Gebeimes*.

The drum-beat that introduces *Ihr junge Leute* prepares us for the story of the young man who is going into the army and whose sweetheart asks his comrades to take the very best care of him. Again Gerhardt, in Vol. 1, has managed to get the mood without the youthful voice quality the song would seem to demand. *Und willst du deinen Liebsten Sterben sehen* is a plea to a lady that she never again do up her hair, since it is so lovely as it falls about her shoulders, illuminated by her beauty. The broken chords of the opening suggest the bound-up strands, and as the singer enlarges upon the loveliness of the flowing tresses we can almost see them in the gentle movement of the piano arpeggios. Hüsch (Vol. 4) is a bit overweight in this most delicate of songs, and there is a jarring mistake in Mr. Müller's playing of the little postlude. Far more acceptable to me is the 1907 Gerhardt-Nikisch disc (IRCC 11) in spite of the primitive recording. Here again is the young and fresh-voiced Gerhardt, who is able to set the mood with a single tone. If she is a little thin on the final *Haare*, I think we can blame the reproduction. The one real cause for objection is the big *portamento* in which she indulges on the word *Fäden*. In spite of the essential inappropriateness of a woman's voice in this song, hers is easily the better of the two versions. This song is included in the new Gerhardt album (issued in a special limited edition), and in all respects save sheer voice this is likely to remain the definitive performance. This time she does not allow herself the luxury of the *portamento*.

An Inimitable Piano Line

Heb' auf dein blondes Haupt is a little serenade, with an inimitable Wolfian piano line and consummate word spacing. It is well, if not profoundly, done by Hüsch in Vol. 4. The postlude, however, as played by Mr. Müller, has a tendency to fall to pieces. Still in Vol. 4, we have Kipnis singing *Wir haben beide lange Zeit geschwiegen*, a song of reconciliation in which the angels are depicted as bringing peace to the lovers in the night time. This song

shares a side with *Nun lass uns Frieden Schliessen*, and has the same magnificent vocal virtues and the same not quite understandable faults. In its underlying idea *Mein Liebster singt am Haus* might be classed with the Eichendorf *Ständchen* and the treatment is in a large measure similar. But this time a girl lies in her bed and hears her lover singing outside. The serenade is played by the piano, while the little drama unfolds itself in the girl's words. The recording in Vol. 4 is a fine one, and Ria Ginster is the artist. In the same volume Rethberg again surprises us with her passionate utterance of the little outbursts of rage called *Man sagt mir, deine Mutter woll' es nicht*, and Hüscher is

years" whom the young lady wants. The effect is definitely amusing, and it is well brought out by Rethberg and Bos in Vol. 4. The jaunty prelude in *Mein Liebster bat zu Tische mich geladen* (suggestive of that to *In dem Schatten meiner Locken*) tells us what to expect in this song. The description of the young man's ill-set table is not inappropriate to Trianti's white tones, and her record in Vol. 3 is entertaining enough. *Ich liess mir sagen* falls to the capable offices of Mme. Rethberg and Mr. Bos, who do well by its dolorous restlessness (Vol. 4).

Schon streckt' ich aus is exceedingly clever, beginning as a characteristically undetermined recitative. A lively figure

Villa in Döbling where Wolf composed his "Italienischen Liederbuches".



at his best in *Ein Ständchen Euch zu bringen*. Kipnis sings one of the most glorious songs of all, *Was für ein Lied*. "What kind of song is worthy to be sung to you? No such song has ever yet been heard, even by the oldest people." Here again we have the favorite devices of an independent melody, in the piano part, and of indecisive tonality finding its solution in the final pithy line of the poetry. Again, too, we have Kipnis at top form. Once more accompanied by an anonymous pianist, however, the singer's voice somewhat overbalances his modest collaborator.

Ich esse nun mein Brot is another extremely youthful lied, with perhaps even more yearning in it than *Wie lange schon*. This time it is an "old man of fourteen

changes the mood, representing at first the act of a lover jumping out of bed, and then gradually melting down into the sound of the lute with which he goes singing through the streets. The Hüscher and Müller recording in Vol. 3 is an excellent one. *Du sagst mir dass ich keine Fürstin sei* is youthful, scornful and very feminine. In answer to the accusation that her family is not of the very best, this girl points out quite strongly that the young man who thus upbraids her is hardly a prince himself. Once again I must praise the finely pointed performance of Mme. Rethberg which is to be found in Vol. 4. And in the same album this artist successfully bridges the psychological gap between this little drama

and that of *Wohl kenn' ich Euren Stand*, in which the signorina admits that she is far beneath her lover, and that she has no right to expect him to stoop to her station. The love between them has been embarrassing to her—but he is so handsome, who could be angry with him? As anyone might expect, this idea draws the very best from the composer. Particularly happy is the melting little postlude. The thirteenth song, *Lass sie nur gebn*, is one of the five still unrecorded Italian lieder.

Rethberg At Her Best

Wie soll ich frohlich sein and *Was soll der Zorn* are two more of Rethberg's fine contributions to Vol. 4, and *Sterb' ich, so hüllt in Blumen meine Glieder* is done by Kipnis in the same volume. This long and endlessly sustained song is one of the most difficult of all for the singer, and the basso seems rather careful than convincing in his performance. And it must be admitted that Mr. Bos falls down a bit in the necessary business of holding the lied together. We should not forget, however, that this is the most difficult kind of song, not only to perform but also to record.

Und steht Ibr früh is another of the priceless gems in which this collection abounds. It appears in Vol. 1, sung, of course, by Mme. Gerhardt, with Mr. Bos at the piano. This is, to be sure, ideally a man's song, but I am ashamed even to mention the fact when speaking of this record, since the song so unequivocally comes off. The flowing eighth-notes of the piano part are as descriptive as anything could be of the young beauty walking down the street and into the church. And we may divine her youth and aliveness in the constant shifting of tonality. She pauses a moment to cross herself and dip her hand into the holy water, then leaves the church and is on her way. Only in the concluding line is the walking figure again interrupted, and it is resumed in the postlude for a perfect ending. I cannot leave this song without mention of the haunting quality of Gerhardt's voice as she says *benedeiten Stätte*. As if reluctant to change this mood of quiet exaltation, Wolf follows it with *Benedeit die sel'ge*

Mutter, a love song of almost religious fervor. Besides the splendid Hüsch record in Vol. 3, there is a good recent one by Karl Schmitt-Walter with Ferdinand Leiter at the piano (Telefunken A 2541).

Exaltation of a somewhat different kind is the keynote of *Wen du, mein Liebster, steigst zum Himmel auf*, a magnificent song of the triumph of love in death. Surprisingly enough, there have been no single records of this most effective work; the field is left to Rethberg alone (Vol. 4). Very strongly contrasted to the other songs she sings, this is in a way the least satisfying of her Wolf recordings. This, however, is less her fault than that of the excellent Mr. Bos, who somehow fails to rise with the singer to the rapture of the climax. Always better in delicate tracery than in big or sustained lines, the pianist is shown on his weaker side. The pathetic resignation of *Wie viele Zeit verlor' ich* is well portrayed by Kipnis and the passion of *Wenn du mich mit den Augen streifest* is understandingly conveyed by Hüsch, both in Vol. 4. Of the latter I can only complain again of the not quite free high tone at the great climax. *Gesegnet sei das Grün* and *O war' dein Haus durchsichtig wie ein Glas* are excellently sung by Ria Ginster in Vol. 4. *Heut' Nacht erhob ich mich* as we have it from Hüsch in the same collection is a little heavier-handed than it need be. The singer would do well to talk it a little more. It is a superb song, with another of those crowning postludes. *Nicht länger kann ich singen* has not yet been given us.

Lacking In Conviction

Some of the subtlety of *Schweig einmal still* is lost in Trianti's straight performance in Vol. 3. This scornful disappreciation of a serenade could stand being done with far more unction. *O wüsstest du, wie viel ich deinetwegen* and *Verschling' der Abgrund* are not yet recorded, which leaves for consideration only the popular and not very subtle *Ich hab' in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen*, an encore song *par excellence*. It somehow misses fire in Ginster's singing (Vol. 4) largely because of the weakness of the singer's diction. Above

her medium voice Miss Ginster's words are always hard to follow, and here everything depends on an emphasis on the word *zehn* which she does not succeed in giving. Grammatically speaking, this is an ideal song with which to close the *Italienisches Liederbuch*, but in Wolf it seems somehow like an unusual concession to popular taste. There are so many finer things in this rich and varied collection.

"Michelangelo Lieder"

There remain to be considered only three of the miscellaneous songs and the great *Michelangelo Lieder*. All of these are masterpieces. *Biterolf* is an expression of homesickness and resignation, supposed to be sung by a crusader on the field of Akkon in 1190. The noble text is by Scheffel. I prefer the Schlusnus recording (Brunswick 85000) to the more constricted one of Janssen in Vol. 5, because of the limpid quality of the magnificent voice, the naturally developed climaxes, and the greater feeling of conviction throughout. Mr. Rupp is guilty of one fingerslip, but this is unimportant. *Zur Ruh'* expresses what was with Wolf a very personal sentiment, and it is one of the magnificent things in German song. The Kerner poem is a fine one, and it finds its full expression in this musical embodiment. The poet sings of the longing of the weary for rest—"night it must be, that light may come to me." The climax is a tremendous thing, and very difficult to sing, but it can hardly fail to move the listener. The song has a chromatically descending postlude, in which the mood seems to sink about as low as is possible. I don't know any other music so expressive of utter weariness and final dissolution. An early electrical disc by Royal Dadmun is rather dull going (Victor 4011); it is less interesting to me than the acoustic of Reinald Werrenrath, which was unfortunately made with orchestra (Victor 17179). The latter singer's voice was young and vibrant when the recording was made, and his performance is in every respect good, if not quite distinguished. However, this dip into the past is hardly necessary, since the Janssen recording in Vol. 6 is one of this baritone's best. True, the persistent quaver inter-

feres with the clarity of his intonation in the opening part of the song, but where he is able to put more pressure on the voice it becomes increasingly free and steady, and his climax comes off boldly. Also in Vol. 6 is the Reinick *Gesellenlied*, with its deliberate echoes of *Die Meistersinger*. It is handsomely treated by Helge Roswaenge.

This brings us, at last, to the three *Michelangelo Lieder*, which proved to be Wolf's swan song. He had intended setting more of the great artist-poet's verses, but his fate made this impossible. As we listen to and examine these wonderful creations we can hardly be surprised at the composer's inability to go on, so forceful and so moving are they. A man so sensitive to poetic thought, so unerring in his instinct for detail and so completely the master of his technique that he could always find the right musical expression for every shade of meaning—such a man was bound to collapse sooner or later under the inhuman strain that such composition of necessity put upon him.

A Fitting Crown

This cycle is a fitting crown to the achievements of this amazing man. For here are the elements of all the best work he had previously done. In *Michelangelo* he found something of the philosophical bigness of Goethe, something of the humanity of Mörike, and above all a great deal of that warm Italian spirit which we have found so delightful in the *Italienisches Liederbuch*. *Wohl denk' ich oft* is one of the noblest of songs. It is a tribute to the lady who drew the poet out of himself and brought him fame. *Alles endet, was entstehet* is the essence of pessimism: it speaks in hushed tones of the end of all things. *Fühlt meine Seele* rises again to warm Italian passion, but never to an outburst of sentiment. Trying to analyse the unwonted feelings he is experiencing, the poet finally attributes them to the eyes of the beloved one. Always a master of the pithy final line, and the expressive postlude, Wolf here outdoes himself. It is interesting to note, too, that even to the end we can find Wagnerian echoes in his still very personal style. I suppose it is no accident

that the *Meistersinger* theme trumpets forth at the glorious ending of *Wohl denk' ich oft*, or that the words *Sag mir, wie ich's erwerbe?* are set to the motive of the glance from *Tristan*. Wolf was simply speaking what seemed to him the universal language and doing so most effectively. The three songs are magnificently sung by Kipnis in Vol. 3.

* * *

I can only hope that by going into such detail I have convinced some unbelievers of the incredible fertility and variety of this still neglected composer. To many the fact that Wolf confined himself for the most part to song writing has placed him forever among the "minor" composers. But to others—those who have come closer to the spirit of the much maligned and generally misunderstood art of song—Wolf is one of the greatest of all musical masters.

Surely the concentration necessary to the production of one such masterpiece as *Das doch gemalt, Zur Ruh'*, or *Der Feuerreiter* would hardly be possible to a symphonist, for if the mood were to last long enough to produce a "major work" the composer would surely find his way to the asylum much sooner than Wolf did. A symphony may be written by a formula: it can be put down and taken up again after any lapse of time. Not so a song—it must be written down and completed while the spirit is on the composer. Some song writers have kept their songs for years after they were done, constantly polishing and altering them. Wolf hardly ever made any alterations at all, once he had committed his inspirations to paper. In my mind there is not the slightest doubt that of all the composers the world has known, only Mozart and Bach can stand with Wolf as a sheer musical genius.

Technical Notes

Robert S. Lanier

THE biggest single development of this season is, of course, the marketing of moderate-priced pickups of the permanent-point variety — the Astatic FP models. These pickups have naturally aroused great interest among correspondents of this column, since it is still, unfortunately, true that the pickup is the bottleneck in the production of high quality reproduction from available components. In order to evaluate these new pickups more accurately, a special research project has been set in progress, and the findings will be presented at an early date.

At the moment it can be stated that the FP pickups produce a very much cleaner sound than the standard crystal cartridge, and go farther into the bass and treble ends of the frequency scale, with less tendency to peak. The "definition" between instruments is far better, and the new pickups show up especially well in those fortissimo passages that often turn into hash on the average pickup.

The questions that present themselves have to do with the adaptability of a permanently-shaped point to the great variety of groove sizes now commercially distributed, and with the actual effect of continued use of this pickup on the wearing qualities of the current records.

* * *

Correspondence regarding the "labyrinth" baffle described some months ago has tended to show that this type of construction is a little too critical as to dimensions for the home builder. Careful "cut and try" with rather elaborate test equipment is necessary to bring this type of loudspeaker mounting to a proper efficiency.

A much simpler construction that gives comparable results is the rectangular box with the loudspeaker mounted in the front face. This can take any convenient shape, but it must be very solidly built, of three-fourths to one-inch plywood, or similar solid material. It should be very securely

fastened together, with cross-bracing if necessary, to eliminate vibration. The larger the volume of air that can be enclosed in the box, the better the bass response. Depth is important.

The whole inner surface should be lined with rock-wool or other absorbing material, the thicker the better. The rock-wool bats faced on *one side* with heavy paper are the most convenient to use. The paper affords a means of fastening the rock-wool to the vertical surfaces, and the open faces can be covered with a light netting to keep the rock-wool from dropping off into the box. A circular hole about an inch and a half in diameter, directly in back of the speaker, will help to reduce resonance effects.

If serious "boom" is encountered, the inside should be partially broken up with partitions, thus preventing the enclosed air column from acting too powerfully at a single frequency. These partitions must be of such size as to allow free circulation of sound waves to all parts of the box, but partially trapping the return, and preventing the enclosed air from vibrating as a *single unit*. For instance, in a box 14 inches deep the partitions should be about 10 inches wide, and placed in the middle so that air passes on both sides of them. Rock-wool on the partitions is also desirable.

Serious "boom" in a construction of this kind depends on so many factors, including the resonant point of the speaker, the dimensions of the box, and the characteristics of the amplifier, that it is pointless to try to figure in advance just where and how it will occur. In general, however, a bigger box is a better one — limited only by the size of your living room — and interior *interruptions* — not stoppages — of air circulation are the most effective methods of breaking up boominess.

* * *

The importance of the room as a part of a reproducing system, which has been mentioned in this column before, needs to be emphasized. The room conducts the sound from the loudspeaker to your ear, and influences it profoundly in the process.

Two characteristics of a reproducer especially can be influenced by proper use

of the room — the *loudness*, and the frequency balance. It is amazing how much louder a reproducer can be made to sound by proper placement of the speaker in the room. This increased efficiency is very advantageous in the case of a reproducer which must be pushed close to the distortion point for adequate volume.

A desirable position is in general one in which the speaker operates facing the longest possible dimension, such as the diagonal of a rectangular room. This puts the speaker in a corner, facing out diagonally. The converging walls in back of the speaker form a much more efficient reflecting surface than a straight wall flat in back of the speaker.

In very irregular rooms, those broken up by many doorways or angles, experiment only can determine the best position. One can be sure that the experiment is worth trying because the difference between a good and a bad placement in such rooms is enormous.

The frequency balance will depend to some extent on placement also, but principally on the presence or absence of absorbing material in the room. A room with broad surfaces of bare wall and floor, with little furniture and few doorways, will be very hard and "bright" — strong high frequencies. On the other hand thick rugs, heavy hangings on the wall, and lots of overstuffed furniture, attenuate the high frequencies tremendously, and change the effect toward softness and dullness. Thus if your room is too bright, a heavy rug or some hangings will help. Somewhere between the two extremes will be found a pleasing balance.

Overtones

RUMORS fly thick and fast, but one can never be certain that what is said to have been recorded will eventually show up on discs. One newspaper recently stated that Mitropoulos had recorded the Mahler *First Symphony*, which he played while in New York. Also that Walter had made a Beethoven and a Schumann symphony with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York

The League of Composers, which has long been active in the interests of modern music, has entered the recording field. They intend to promote the distribution of new music on discs. A first recording has been made; it is a performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, a setting of twenty-one poems by Alfred Giraud in which the singer employs the so-called Sprechstimme. The recording has been made with Schoenberg himself conducting and Mme. Erika Wagner-Stiedry as soloist, and will be issued as an album of four twelve-inch discs, price \$4.50.

The League of Composers invites interested people to cooperate in the selection of other music for their recording series. To this end they are sending out a list of twelve significant works written in the last twenty-five years, asking the reader to indicate the order of his preference for recording. Copies of this list may be had from the League of Composers, Inc., 113 West 57th Street, N. Y. City.

* * *

We have been able to get hold of some German Polydor lists for the past year. Apparently recording is still going on in Germany, although a great deal of it would seem to be duplication of standard works, like Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, in performances that meet with the approval of the Nazi authorities. Schlusnus has continued active in the recording studios, and so too has Wilhelm Kempff, the pianist.

Here is a list of new Polydor works:

- BEETHOVEN: *An die ferne Geliebte*; Heinrich Schlusnus. Discs 67544/45.
 BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in A major, Op. 2, No. 2*; Wilhelm Kempff. Discs 67590/92.
 CHERUBINI: *Anacreon Overture*; Karajan and State Opera Orch. Disc 67514.
 DVORAK: *New World Symphony*; Karajan and Berlin Phil. Orch. Discs 67519/24.
 HADYN: *Symphony No. 86 in G major*; Paul Schmitz and Leipzig Conservatory Chamber Orch. Discs 57107/109.
 MOZART: *Sonata No. 11 in A major*; Elly Ney. Discs 67596/98.
 RESPIGHI: *Feste Romane*; Sabata and Berlin Phil. Orch. Discs 67510/13.

SCHUBERT: *Nacht und Traume*, and *Wobin*; Heinrich Schlusnus. Disc 62-821.

STAMITZ, Johann: *Symphony in E flat, Op. 4, No. 6*; Walter Gemeindl and Berlin State Orchestra. Discs 67554/55.

STRAUSS: *Tod und Verklärung*; Sabata and Berlin Phil. Orch. Discs 67516/18.

STRAUSS: *Traum durch die Dämmerung*, and *Freundliche Vision*; Franz Volker. Disc 62817.

WOLF: *Anacreons Grab*; and *Der Rattenfänger*; Heinrich Schlusnus. Disc 67593.

* * *

England still seems to be making her feature releases in American recordings; thus in February we find Koussevitzky's performance of Schumann's *First Symphony* and Ormandy's performance of Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe Suite No. 2* heading the H.M.V. list. New works of interest issued in England this past month are:

- ABEL (arr. Carse): *Symphony, Op. 10, No. 3*; Boyd Neel String Orchestra. Decca K944.
 BRIDGE: *Phantasie in C minor*; the Grinke Trio. Decca K945/46.
 CHOPIN: *Impromptu No. 2 in F sharp major, Op. 36*, and *Fantaisie Impromptu in C sharp minor, Op. 66*; Louis Kentner. Columbia DX997.
 HANDEL: *Faramondo Overture*; Boyd Neel String Orch. Decca K947.
 LAWSON: *Maiden of Morven*; and arr. MOORE: *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon*; John McCormack. H.M.V. DA-1762.
 MOZART: *Alleluia*; and HANDEL: *O Had I Jubal's Lyre*; Gwen Catley (soprano), with orchestra. H.M.V. B-9138.
 RACHMANINOFF: *Prelude in B minor, Op. 32*; and MENDELSSOHN, arr. Rachmaninoff: *Scherzo from Midsummer Night's Dream*; Benno Moiseivitch. M.M.V. C3209.
 FOLK SONGS, arranged by Cecil Sharp and Vaughan Williams: *The Nightingale*; *The Two Crows*; *Young Floro*; *The Cuckoo*; *The Captain's Apprentice*; *The Lark in the Morn*; *Nutting Time*; *Dance to Your Daddy*. Sung by Marie Howes. Two Decca 12-inch discs.

FOLK SONGS: *I will walk with my love; I know where I'm going; The Next Market Day; and I have a bonnet trimmed with blue;* sung by Barbara Mullens, Ivor Newton at the piano. H.M.V. B9132.

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Mr. Grover J. Oberle, the organist of St. Thomas' Church in New York, tells an interesting story about recording. It seems the faint rumble of the subway could be heard in some records he was making, particularly at night, when recording conditions were most ideal. In desperation after many tests Mr. Oberle and his recording engineer decided to call up the city and get a schedule on the subway trains so that they could work between trains. The city authorities were most obliging and reported that after twelve at night the trains were separated by a nine-minute interval: so the recordings that Mr. Oberle made on the organ of St. Thomas' (to be reviewed in the next issue) were made between two and six in the morning between subway trains.

Collector's Corner

Julian Morton Moses

In looking back on the record industry, we find that the year 1906 marked the turning point in the history of that industry in America. Starting nearly two decades earlier, it had to undergo many trials, legal, mechanical and psychological, before the time was ripe for large-scale production of a standardized product. The tale of these formative and nearly fatal years will make a fascinating story when it is finally written.

By 1908, the "talking" machine had become the "singing" machine and it was in that phase of musical reproduction that its artistic and financial future was to be set for the next twenty years. That its accomplishments are not impossibly out of date from our infinitely superior standards of thirty-five years later can be seen

from the excellent new Victor catalogue for 1941 which, through these many years of high and higher fidelity, still contains records from the year 1906.

The items of lasting musical and artistic importance which date from the early 1900s are frequently of European origin though they were offered for sale here. The Victor 5000 series as well as the 61,000 series (Michailowa), the Columbia *Mielis* and others of the foreign-language black and silver labels, the Zonophone *Tetrazzinis*, the Fonotipia *Boncis* were all of this class. Notable exceptions, of course, were the very rare Columbia red-label Grand Opera series and the more common Victor 81,000 Monarchs and 85,000 De Luxes. These were both, however, numerically limited groups although they were the harbingers of what was to follow.

In 1906, Victor started its mass production of celebrity records by reducing prices on some (not all, as in 1940) and changing almost all new catalogue numbers of the long lived 74,000, 88,000 and similar series. The imported 92,000 series came the following year; they will be discussed in subsequent articles. Columbia also introduced a new series, that numbered in the 30,000s. But all this came a bit later than the period we are dealing with, and we will outline our plans and then recapitulate.

Subject to suggestions, I would like to outline every three months, rather than monthly, the records issued in the similar period thirty-five years ago. It is my plan to discuss most comprehensively the items of general appeal and to criticise these from a musician's rather than a discophile's standpoint. Out-of-the-way records, as well as all those that cannot be played on standard machines today, I shall mention only when they possess unique musical importance. Such matters as label identification, matrix numbers and the like will be out of the picture here. Foreign records (if they are such as would be commonly possessed by collectors today) and recordings of outstanding instrumentalists will, however, be included.

Finally, before briefly discussing the January to March, 1906, period, I should like to mention *The Record Collector's Guide*,

which has previously been noted in these pages. It is a short book I compiled, which, with a very few omissions, contains all Victor and Columbia celebrity records of domestic origin issued up to 1912. It lists all the American recordings from which selected items can and probably will be discussed in this column for the next five years.

Fortunately for me, the first quarter of 1906 was one of little productivity for Victor and Columbia. Perhaps they were both concentrating on the important releases which were soon to follow. At any rate, Victor issued in its celebrity groups only a few selections by Schumann-Heink and Ellison Van Hoose (the Texas tenor who was a pupil of Jean de Reszke), and Columbia, which had been idle for nearly three years as far as real top-notchers were run of arias by Ciaparelli, Parvis and Nui-concerned, brought forth only the usual bo. From a strictly artistic standpoint (to which as I have said I would like to adhere) I need not tarry long. The Schumann-Heink records (Nos. 85092-96) include a selection from *Love's Lottery*, her then recent Broadway venture (there was no Hollywood in those days) and four standard contralto pieces—arias from *St. Paul*, *Samson and Delilah* and *Le Prophete*—all of which she did again in 1909. Also included is the *Brindisi* from *Lucrezia Borgia* (85096), which is really outstanding. One should hear it if one has not done so already. It will convince the sceptics that "the grand old lady", as she became known (in 1906 in her prime, however, since she was only 45), had top notes, a real trill and amazing flexibility, the like of which is not found in many voices of her kind.

Van Hoose I like very much. One of the misprints in my book has him dying in Boston, instead of Houston, his native city. His three January, 1906, records (Nos. 85089 to 91, later remade and in some instances re-recorded under numbers 74033 to 35) include a lovely *O Come with Me in the Summer Night* (Van der Stucken, 85089), (a song much sung at this period), which is a fine model of ballad singing. There was also a good recording of *Lobengrin's Narrative* (85090). The other recording was a German lied,

Am Rhein by Ries. As for the Columbia records, none of the artists were really first rate. Nuibo was comparatively unknown although he sounds somewhat better than equally unknown French tenors of today. His selections were largely chosen from the standard repertoire and included familiar arias from such operas as *Martha*, *Carmen*, *Mignon*, *Mireille*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Ciaparelli made plenty of records, many good but none of the spell-binding variety. More distinctive than either of these two artists was Taurino Parvis, not too well known in America but justly famous in his native Italy. His voice was of the bass-baritone class, very similar in sound to Scotti's, and he used it with considerable artistry, though his efforts at a high G were apt to sound shouty and lacking in resonance (he wisely omitted the A flats, as did Scotti and many other contemporary baritones). All this may be noticed in his March, 1906, recording of *O dei verd'anni miei* from *Ernani* (No. 3113). Most of the records of Parvis and Ciaparelli of this period had tin-pan-like piano accompaniments.

(Editor's Note: Mr. Moses' book *The Record Collector's Guide* may be obtained for \$1.00, postpaid, from The American Record Collector's Exchange, 101 West 53rd St., New York, N. Y.).

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 229)

we were cognizant of the disinclination of some people to accept music from certain sources, that we mentioned the matter of royalties. No one hopes or wishes more than I do that, after this war is over, the royalties from such a recording may go to their source, the musicians who played the work. But there are many who feel they do not wish to support anything of German origin. This sort of thing is almost inevitable in wartime. England has been bigger and more magnanimous during this strife than Germany or Italy, for England has not banned the performance of

German or Italian music nor the sale of records made by German or Italian artists. In the final analysis, these things will be taken into consideration.

We have received letters protesting against German music and German-made recordings. We have been asked, nay urged, to print some of these. But what price music? It is really not the music which has been taken into consideration but the source of it. It is quite possible that there are many who, having suffered at the hands of Germany, would like never again to hear the language. I wonder if such people are music lovers, whether they would eventually want to ban German music also. I sincerely hope not. Many of these people opposed to the politics of Germany and Italy today point out that those countries have banned English, French, and even American music. On the other side, we

have been told that Telefunken in Germany recently brought out a recording of Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*, which means very little, since France today is all too plainly in the German orbit.

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It has always been our policy to review all worthwhile recordings. Thus we are reluctant to go to press before all of the major releases have been received. For several months the Columbia records have been about two weeks late in arriving; and since we feel that our readers would rather have the magazine a few days late than be deprived of reviews of some recordings, we have delayed publication for the time necessary to review the more important of these records. Those which, because of temporal limitations, are not reviewed in this issue will be discussed next month.

Record Notes and Reviews

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

Orchestra

ANSELL: *Plymouth Hoe* — Overture; played by Light Symphony Orchestra, direction John Ansell. Victor 10-inch disc 27252, price 50c.

▲ There are a lot of folks who are going to like this blithe and buoyant little piece, which the composer describes as a Nautical Overture, if they take the trouble to hear it. Ansell, a young English composer, is said to know the theatre and its music intimately. In other words he knows how to write music of entertainment. Whether or not the composer actually uses any folk tunes, we cannot say, but the jauntiness and cheerfulness of the themes suggest that he did, and the melody toward the end of side one has suggested to one English reviewer that it was derived from some sea song. But tunes that have reminiscent qualities are tunes that are best remembered. Those employed here are good light

ones. The little overture is well put together and the instrumentation is adroit. The composer seems to be an able conductor, one who wisely does not linger over any of his tunes, but instead keeps things moving along. The recording is good.

—P. G.

COPLAND: *Music for the Theatre*; played by the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, direction of Howard Hanson. Victor set M-744, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ *Music for the Theatre* suggests music of entertainment, but one wonders whether Copland's dissonant acerbity and his jazz rhythms will prove entertaining over a long period of time. One recalls Lambert's observations on the use of jazz in serious music, in his provocative book *Music Ho!* He says, "Whether the composer can afford to treat the harmonic basis of jazz so

freely is a little doubtful. Much of the emotional stimulus of jazz is due to the piquant contrast between the terse and slangy rhythm and the somewhat glucose harmony." Copland, of course, never wrote glucose harmony; if anything the harmony of his early works is pithy and acridly dissonant. In the twenties, this music was labelled "highbrow jazz". Similar works were perpetrated by other composers — for example, Milhaud, Weill, Krenek and Stravinsky. Some of them were more successful than others; indeed Milhaud's *Le Creation du Monde* has become a classic of its period. Among the serious composers in this country, perhaps none has exceeded Copland in his successful assimilation of jazz idioms and in the use of them, as one writer has noted, towards artistic ends.

The influence of Stravinsky, especially *Le Sacre du Printemps*, is apparent in this work. On the whole, despite the jazz elements, the music is cosmopolitan in spirit rather than idiomatically American. This composition is typical of the rather adolescent attitude of post-war American composers. Copland obviously was still experimenting and not yet, in our estimation, the master of form that he is today. Side by side with blatant and raucous sections he places thematic material of genuine poetry. To cite one example, there is the strident opening subject of the Prologue which gives way to a lovely and expressive theme of a completely different character. There are five movements: *Prologue, Dance, Interlude, Burlesque, and Epilogue*. The *Dance* is noisy, dissonant and jazzy; the *Interlude* has real beauty of mood and is ingeniously orchestrated. The *Burlesque* recalls Stravinsky. It is as dated as most works of a similar genre of its period. The *Epilogue*, reintroducing material from the first and third movements, is effectively contrived and more expressive.

Copland has been fortunate in having an obviously sympathetic interpreter in the recording of this music; for Howard Hanson, long a champion of the cause of American music, gives a sincere and forceful performance. The recording is excellently contrived. —P. H. R.

CORELLI: *Concerto Grosso No. 11 in B flat major, Op. 6*; played by Arthur Fiedler's Sinfonietta. Victor disc 13587, price \$1.50.

▲ Here's a companion disc to the Bach suites and the Handel concerti grossi. This work might be characterized as a suite, except for the division of the parts between solo and supporting instruments. Corelli wrote twelve of these works, the first eight of which, ending with the lovely Christmas Night Concerto, contain fugues and other movements that are not dance movements.

The last four, of which this is one, consist mainly of dance movements preceded by a prelude. Here we have, in addition to the prelude, an allemande, an adagio, a sarabande, and a gigue.

Parry points out that the works of Corelli are written with a freedom and elasticity which are astonishing when compared to the qualities of most of the instrumental compositions preceding his time. "Corelli was almost the first composer who showed a consistent instinct for style, and this marks one of the most important attainments in the development of instrumental music." There are far too many patronizing criticisms written these days of music of this kind which is not only of historical interest but also aurally stimulating. One cannot repeat too often that such music as this is particularly refreshing in a time like our own.

Fiedler can be relied upon to do justice to music of this kind, and I am certain many will be grateful to him for this finely recorded performance. Although one may feel that his performance would have gained much in color and style by the inclusion of a harpsichord, the fact that it is absent did not prevent enjoying the performance. —P. H. R.

DEBUSSY: *The Afternoon of a Faun*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction Leopold Stokowski. Victor disc 17700, price \$1.00.

▲ Stokowski's previous recording of this piece was one of the big sellers in the Victor catalogue. According to the sponsors, it ranked in popularity with his recordings of the *Blue Danube Waltz* and *Finlandia*. Dating from 1927, Stokowski's first re-

cording had none of the nuances of the present one, for recording in those days was largely a matter of two grades of tone, forte and mezzo-forte. All the gradations of tone that were missing in the conductor's earlier version are brought out here; indeed this is a most effective recording. Stokowski's faun is a dreamier, more languorous one than Beecham's. Both conductors seem to have a strong liking for this music, and both give good performances. Those who admired Stokowski's first recording are strongly advised to replace it with the new one. Those who do not already own a recording of this work should by all means hear this recording as well as the Beecham. Stokowski lingers over the music more than the British conductor does, and he indulges in more rubati; but this is music that can stand a lot of that sort of treatment. How much, however, remains a matter of personal taste.

We cannot forebear quoting from the description of a faun given by the sponsors of this disc for the trade. It begins, "a short note to brush up on your mythology," and continues as follows: "a faun was a mythical creature—half man, half beast—whose major job in life was to chase about with an eagle eye open for wood nymphs, which is nice work if you can get it, and if you can run very fast. Wood nymphs have been known to run 100 yards in ten seconds flat, and that is close to the Olympic record." Debussy's faun may have had an eagle eye, but, if we remember the original Mallarmé poem, he seems to have been content to dream about his nymphs and he also seems to have been in doubt whether he was really the recipient of a visit from nymphs, "divinely tender and indulgent", or just a lazy dreamer.

—P. G.

DVORAK: *Carneval Overture, Op. 92*; played by the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony, conducted by Howard Barlow. Columbia disc 70739-D, price \$1.00.

▲ This is a surprise, for by all odds it's the best recording that we've had to date from this celebrated broadcasting orchestra. Again, we find Barlow at top form. The buoyant, rejoicing mood of this music is excellently conveyed by him. One senses

from the very beginning that he likes this music, and that he wants his listeners also to enjoy it. Dvorak was in a real holiday mood when he wrote this overture; it seems as though he might be saying to us all "let's go holidaying", and with the first bars of the music away we go.

Carneval is the second of three overtures, to which the composer gave the general title of *Nature, Love, and Life*. The first, *Amid Nature*, is seldom if ever performed; but the third, *Othello*, is heard occasionally. It's an interesting work, and one which Barlow might consider for future recording.

Anyone who has Fiedler's finely recorded performance of *Carneval* will scarcely be interested in the present one. But if one hasn't a performance of the work, it would be a good idea to hear them both before buying. As for this reviewer, since he already has the Fiedler version he's going to keep it.

—P. G.

FAVORITE OVERTURES: *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna* (von Suppé); *Poet and Peasant* (von Suppé) (discs 12479 and 11986); both played by the Boston "Pops" Orch., dir. Arthur Fiedler. *Merry Wives of Windsor* (Nicolai); *Light Cavalry* (von Suppé) (discs 11836 and 11837); played by the B.B.C. Symphony Orch., dir. Sir Adrian Boult. Victor set M-746, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ None of these is a new recording. The first two were reviewed in the October, 1939, and February, 1937, issues of the *American Music Lover*; the B.B.C. recordings were released here before May, 1935. It does not take a very sensitive pair of ears to note the difference between the earlier and later recordings; Fiedler is much more brilliantly recorded, while the Boult discs suffer from a loose and vibrating bass and a generally muffled quality. Nor is the interpretation of the Nicolai overture all that might be desired. We wonder why Victor did not see fit to include the "Pops" recording, which was issued only a short time ago.

However, this set is certain to make a good many people happy. The pieces are artificial and conventional, but, after all, have stood the test of years; and who can deny that they have not a certain place

in music? They rattle along in a pretty fashion, they arrive at resounding climaxes, and often succeed in being more appealing than many a more pretentious piece of music. They are pictures of certain phases of "alt Wien" and of the beer-and-pretzel era of musical Germany.

—H. C. S.

MOZART: *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, K. 525; played by the London Symphony Orchestra, direction of Felix Weingartner. Columbia set X-187, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ This little work, which Mozart called a serenade but which he might have titled a miniature symphony, is universally regarded as one of the most delightful of all of this master's compositions. By now all superlatives should be exhausted for this music; but we forget too often that there are newcomers to music each year and that the classic gems which have been with us for so long may be falling for the first time on the ears of others. It is one of the true pleasures of life to discover music like this, and it is a constant source of pleasure to be able to hear it in finely moulded and genial performances like the present one. What an unpredictable person Mozart was! On the one side he could write lightly, blithely, and on the other he could create implications of tragedy and sorrow. Mozart completed this work on the 10th of August, 1787, two weeks later he brought out a sonata for violin and piano, and *Don Giovanni* was completed two months later.

Listening to this recording one cannot help but note how much better it is than so much of the domestic orchestral recording Columbia has been giving us of late. It offers no reproductive problems, and its frequency range seems entirely satisfactory under existing circumstances. Weingartner's performance is one in which taste and musicianship are well displayed. Walter has contributed the most successful performance prior to this one (Victor set M-361); indeed his playing of this little work has long been regarded as a model for its expression of the beauty of the music. It seems that the last conductor to be recorded these days has the last word in recording, such is the rate of progress of the in-

dustry; and so, in this case, Weingartner from the reproductive standpoint may be said to have the last word. But not so from the interpretative side. For it is doubtful that any owning the Walter version would replace it with this set. For those who do not possess this work as yet we urge a hearing of both versions; they are both tops.

—P. G.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOW: *Capriccio Espagnol*; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of John Barbirolli. Columbia set X-185, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Outside of some fine musicianship displayed by several of the first-desk men of the orchestra, this performance has nothing to commend it over the earlier one made by Fiedler and the Boston "Pops". The recording, like all those recently made by Barbirolli, suffers through an attenuated quality in the highs, which makes it difficult to reproduce satisfactorily on many machines.

—P. G.

SIBELIUS (75th Anniversary Album): *Finlandia* (disc 17701); *The Swan of Tuonela* (disc 17702); and *Lemminkäinen's Homeward Journey* (disc 177-03); played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Victor set M-750, price \$3.50.

▲ Two of the finest, if not *the* finest, recordings issued during 1940 came from the Philadelphia Orchestra: these were Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé Suite No. 2* and Rachmaninoff's *Third Symphony*. Here again we have richly sonorous and clearly voiced orchestral reproduction, the sort of recording that is a pleasure in itself. Heard on the best equipment, it is most impressive.

Obviously this album was selected and arranged for popular consumption, yet it will appeal in part to connoisseurs also. In the first place, we have at long last a superb recording and a fine-grained performance of that unmatched tone poem, which might have been called a concerto for English horn, *The Swan of Tuonela*. Under Ormandy's direction this music flows more fluently and hangs together much better than it did in an earlier recording made

by Stokowski. Further, the tonal nuances, which were missing in the Stokowski recording (made in 1931), are more fully evidenced here. The poetic beauty of this music has never been brought out better on records; for not only does this recording eclipse the earlier Stokowski one but it also surpasses in the finer playing of both soloists and ensemble the recent one made by the Chicago Symphony.

Both *The Swan of Tuonela* and *Lemminkäinen's Homeward Journey* belong to a series of four orchestral "legends" which Sibelius based upon the Finnish national poetic epic, *Kalevala*. These tone poems are actually the third and fourth; the first two, although completed, have never been released for publication by the composer. *Lemminkäinen's Homeward Journey* is pure descriptive music; although it is said to "reflect the hero's attitude and emotions, rather than the incidents of his journeyings", it conveys little more than the bustling activity and energy of his ride homeward. Its program reads in part: "Lemminkäinen is the warrior-hero, the Achilles of Finnish mythology. His intrepidity and beauty made him the beloved of women. Fatigued by a succession of wars and combats, he decides to return to his home. Having transformed his sorrows and solicitudes into war-steeds he sets out on his way . . ."

The suggestion of the war-steeds is rife in the music. One is reminded of the formula of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*, which Sibelius in no way, however, imitates. As in his *Night Ride and Sunrise*, he is more resourceful than Wagner, providing more contrast and color and building to a greater and far more imposing climax.

Those who do not own the Beecham album containing Sibelius' *Fourth Symphony* as well as this latter tone poem (Victor set M-446) will find this new recording well worth acquiring.

Finlandia is, of course, Sibelius' most popular work. The recent war in Finland has brought it into even greater prominence, for it is said the Finns themselves regard it as a sort of national anthem. Ormandy gives a brilliant straightforward account of this familiar music, a perform-

ance better spaced and proportioned than the recent Rodzinski, which was the most realistic of the work prior to this one.

—P. H. R.

STRAUSS: *Ein Heldenleben* (*A Hero's Life*), Op. 40; played by the Cleveland Orchestra, direction of Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set M-441, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ Let it be said at the outset that this is equally as impressive a performance as the recent set made by Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, but it is by no means as satisfactory a recording. The middle voices of the orchestra, notably the horn passages, are veiled and lacking in clarity. The recording lacks the cleanness and transparency that was manifest in the earlier ones made by this orchestra. If one allows for a good bass definition, one may find the woodwinds dimmed and lacking in luster; on the other hand if one reduces the bass a shrillness of highs will be noted on a high fidelity machine. So many readers have written to us saying that the best orchestral recordings, from the standpoint of reproduction, in the Columbia catalogue are those by Beecham that we are at a loss to understand why this enterprising company has not sought to attain the standards of its British affiliate. Since some readers profess to have written to the company, we can well believe that it must be cognizant of the opinions of musical listeners.

It can hardly be said that a new recording of *Ein Heldenleben* was needed at this time; particularly when admirers of Strauss have been clamoring for over a decade for electrical recordings of such works as his tone poem *Macbeth* and his early symphonic fantasia *Aus Italien*. In the early part of the twenties the late Eduard Mörike made acoustical recordings of both these works, works which were subsequently neglected. Many writers contend that *Macbeth* is a better composition than *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Strauss is said not to have attempted to depict the external events of Shakespeare's tragedy, although he appended a speech of Lady Macbeth from Act I, Scene 5 at the head of his score. Instead he has, as the late Lawrence Gilman has said, endeavored to portray



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the character of the play's chief protagonist, Macbeth, and the struggle which goes on within his soul. *Aus Italien* has four movements: *On the Campagna*; *Amid Rome's Ruins*; *On the Shore of Sorrento*; and *Neapolitan Folk Life*. Strauss is uneven in most of his works, but in this early symphonic fantasia he wrote some fine program music. The inscrutable stillness and loneliness of the Campagna behind whose scenic destitution lies a tragic secret is made apparent in his music; and the martial splendor that was once Rome's is effectively conveyed in the second movement. The most remarkable of the four parts is the Sorrento picture; this presents Strauss in one of his rarest lyrical moods. The finale makes use of the popular Neapolitan song, *Funiculi, Funicula*, which Strauss is said to have believed a folk song. The work was written in his twenty-second year, after a visit to Rome and Naples.

It has been said of Strauss that he is the most accomplished master of photographic suggestion in music. This gift has proved more of a weakness than a strong point. No more banal exploitation of musical realism is to be found than his section in *Heldenleben* entitled, *The Hero's Battlefield*. *Heldenleben* does not rank as one of Strauss' major contributions; it is pompous and sentimental in part, and it seems to me that one becomes quickly surfeited with certain sections. However, the final pages remain among the most beautiful he has given us; their contemplative and tranquil mood has been equalled by the composer elsewhere but perhaps not surpassed.

—P. G.

TSCHAIKOWSKY: *Symphony No. 3 in D major, Op. 29 (Polish)*; played by the National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Hans Kindler. Victor set M-747, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ Tchaikowsky was thirty-five when he wrote this work. The fit of depression he was suffering from at that time and the irksomeness of his post at the Conservatoire are nowhere suggested in this music. The work is full of a youthful naivete, and is both well made and attractively scored. Its sobriquet, which by the way does not

fit the symphony, was given it by an Englishman because of some Polish rhythms occasionally used. Curiously the composer raised no objections to this title. But he work is far from Polish; Berezowsky contends it is more western in character than its two predecessors and that it reflects both the spirit of Schumann and the brilliance of the French school. It has been pointed out by many writers that it owns few Russian characteristics. There is a strong Teutonic flavor to much of the music, particularly the waltz-like second movement, marked *alla Tedesca*, and the *andante elegiaco*. The scherzo, with its whirling figures in the accompaniments, is reminiscent of Smetana's *Moldau*. The work has five movements, instead of the conventional four; but the fourth movement might well have been excluded. Apparently the composer had not the courage to leave the waltz-like second movement as his scherzo. It is interesting to note that he was concerned with this form long before he came to write the controversial third movement of the *Fifth Symphony*.

The best of this symphony lies in the first three movements; the scherzo is sort of anti-climactic and the finale is distinctly a letdown. It is the last movement, marked *alla polacca* (in the style of a polonaise), which inspired the sobriquet. As an annotator remarks, it is perhaps the most ambitious of the five movements. Unquestionably it owns hearty vigor and a good rhythmic impetus, but it does not flow as freely or as spontaneously as the earlier movements.

Stravinsky is said to have a great admiration for this work; it had not been played by a major orchestra in New York City for nearly half a century when he performed it in 1937 with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. The late Lawrence Gilman hailed its performance; said he, in a Sunday article: "It may be granted at once that Tchaikowsky's Third Symphony has not the vitality and drive and salience of its successor, the perennially popular Fourth. Yet the Third is anything but a negligible work . . . it is a work of charm, of feeling, of refinement, of invention and ingenuity. Some of it is banal.

(Tschaikowsky is always, at some point, banal) . . . This score is, indeed, so much more effective than certain often-played symphonies by other men that its neglect remains a mystery. It would be easy to name a dozen symphonies in the current concert list which cannot hold a candle to the forgotten Third of Peter Ilyich."

A decade ago Albert Coates recorded this symphony. As fine as his performance was, it is out-dated today, for the recording of 1931 did not permit the dynamic or expressive range that it now does. Kindler and the National Symphony Orchestra provide a worthy successor to what, in its time, was a splendid set. Perhaps Coates brought more incandescence to some of Tschaikowsky's pages; but it cannot be said that Kindler spares the expressive fervor or vigor. Indeed, his is an admirably paced performance, one in which both taste and musicianship are well displayed. As a recording, I find this one wholly satisfac-

tory, and quite a relief from some of the over-amplified ones I have encountered of late.
—P. H. R.

WEBER (arr. Stokowski): *Invitation to the Dance*; played by the All-American Youth Orchestra, direction Leopold Stokowski. Columbia disc 11481-D, price \$1.00.

▲ In November, 1938, Stokowski recorded a far better version of this popular piece with the Philadelphia Orchestra for Victor; a version that was smoother and nearer to the intentions, as we see them, of Weber. The present arrangement seeks to make a virtuoso piece out of the music; brilliant scales for woodwinds and harps dominate certain sections. The whole, however, does show off the remarkable playing qualities of the young musicians. The recording is excellently contrived, with none of the exaggeration of highs prevailing in the earliest recordings of this orchestra.

—P. G.

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Concerto

BRAHMS: *Concerto No. 2 in B flat, Op. 83*; played by Vladimir Horowitz and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, dir. Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M-740, six discs, price \$6.50.

▲ All concerned with this album outdid themselves. Toscanini is at his best, I have never heard Horowitz in better form, and the recording is one of the most brilliant and lifelike that has ever been issued. The fact that it was taken in Carnegie Hall means that none of the dead quality characteristic of Studio 8-H is present; despite some undue surface noise there is a brightness and sparkle about the recording that comes as close to actual performance as recording can come. Naturally the previous versions, by Rubinstein and Schnabel, are now displaced.

This concerto can be interpreted in several ways. Toscanini and Horowitz elect to emphasize its grandeur and big architectural lines. Both artists, of course, are musical giants, and it need hardly be said that they achieve their purpose. In this respect the very opening is significant, for instead of the usual slow-paced horn call there is a strict adherence to the *allegro non troppo* indicated in the score. As is well known, Toscanini often tends towards slightly fast tempi. Here he communicates his nervous energy to the instrumentalists, and the result is a crackling, electrical first movement. The style of Horowitz is a perfect complement to that of the conductor. He too has that crisp, clean, somewhat nervous approach. He too has a big style and perfect control. Like Toscanini, he is less concerned with color than with form. In the power to clarify the structure of a work, both, I think, are unsurpassed. Others may excel in detail, others may be greater colorists, others may even have a more imaginative approach—but no pianist or conductor can draw the outlines of a piece of music so closely together or can impress the form so clearly upon the listener. And what a technician Horowitz is! This Puritan among pianists, with his spare use of the pedal and his obvious disdain for pianistic "effects", has solved all the problems of the keyboard. He is his own orchestra,

and can be heard above the loudest climaxes. Thus, this performance can properly be called heroic. Even in the concert hall I have never heard anything to equal the savage, slashing attacks of piano and orchestra in the agitated section near the end of the first movement (section M, Eulenburg score). Unfortunately the horn section, which plays such an important part, is off pitch in several places.

In the second movement the drama rather than the poetry is stressed. Some pianists, in the dolce section, bring to the music a soft, lyric quality, making a deliberate ritard. Not Horowitz; his playing of this lovely section is almost severe and always *a tempo*. Much can be said for both methods; Horowitz's matches the conductor's interpretation, and an excess of sentiment would be decidedly out of place. It's a man's world—in this concerto, at least. Even in the slow movement, with the singing cello theme, there is no pandering to emotionalism; it is the intellectual side that is stressed. The music sings but it does not wail. Here is encountered a noble dignity that is much more impressive than the conventional subdued interpretation. All of the characteristics of the Toscanini technique are present, from the clearly spun phrasings to the sharp and faultless attacks in the middle section.

The finale is psychologically the perfect movement to cap the drama and intensity of the other three. The listener finds himself bouncing along with the music in a happy manner, and the exhilarating flow of melody and rhythm brings the concerto to a light-hearted close. In contrast to its role in the other movements, the piano has a much more obvious part here, what with scales in thirds, octave passages and brilliant runs.

One of the chief features of the album is the coordination between soloist and orchestra. There are excellent conductors and excellent instrumentalists who are capable of good individual performances but whose temperaments clash when brought together. The old Rubinstein recording of this concerto is a case in point—conductor and soloist had their own notions about tempi, and each went his own sweet way. In other cases the contributions of the



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soloist may be submerged by the temperament of the conductor, or vice versa. Horowitz and Toscanini are a perfect match; one does not overshadow the other and both fit flawlessly into the scheme of things. The teamwork between piano and orchestra could not be bettered. Another thing that could not be bettered was the disposition of this reviewer after hearing the set.

—H. C. S.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet No. 6 in B flat major, Op. 18, No. 6*; played by the Coolidge Quartet. Victor set M-745, five sides, price \$3.00.

▲ In an article I wrote on the Opus 18 quartets in August, 1937, I pointed out that this quartet was badly over-due for re-recording. Two sets existed at that time, one by the Virtuoso String Quartet and the other by the Leners. The former dated from the early thirties, the latter from 1927. Of the two sets that of the Virtuoso was greatly preferable. It has been withdrawn, however, from the Victor catalogue for some time.

The members of the Coolidge Quartet are meticulous musicians, but they fail to obtain the tonal warmth of the Budapest group or the radiance of the Pro Arte ensemble. One misses that in the playing of the first and second movements here. There is more geniality in the melodies of the first movement than is suggested in this performance; I have never been inclined to agree fully with Hadow's observation that Beethoven nodded when he wrote this movement. I have heard the slow movement more graciously accomplished; however, its meditative qualities and long melodic tendrils are done justice to here. The Coolidges' approach to the buoyant little scherzo seems somewhat tentative to me, but one can admire the clean playing of the ensemble in this difficult movement. The Coolidges realize more poetic purity of mood in the introduction section (sometimes mistakenly considered a fourth movement) of the last movement than either of their predecessors did on records; and their performance of the last move-

ment is far better paced and more cleanly played.

The Coolidge Quartet succeeds in recording this work on five sides, whereas the Leners took six and the Virtuoso seven. There are no repeats observed here in the first movement, which occupies one record face. The slow movement takes the better part of two sides, but by placing part of the scherzo on the third record face, space has been conserved. The introduction, which Beethoven marked *La Malinconia*, to the finale takes a single record face and so does the finale itself. The recording is most satisfactorily achieved.

—P. H. R.

MOZART: *Quartet in C major, K. 465*; played by the Kolisch Quartet. Columbia set M-439, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ The sponsors append the nickname "Dissonant" to this quartet. It is hardly justifiable; the voice leading in the opening adagio creates a dissonant effect for a few bars and then the work moves on as smoothly and as harmonically righteous as any work that Mozart wrote. It's a great quartet; one can hardly believe any listener would ever grow tired of hearing it. All this discussion about dissonance has so little to do with the major portion of the work that it seems rather silly. Nicholas Slonimsky, the annotator, is inclined to think Mozart was being mischievous in his music; there are, of course, examples to prove that Mozart could be mischievous upon occasion, notably his *Musical Joke, K. 522* (which the Kolisch Quartet with other players have performed for Victor—set M-432). Dunhill in his excellent analysis of the Mozart quartets, says of this dissonant opening that it "is not only memorable for its anticipation of modern chromaticism but famous for the remarkable stir that it created at the time of its first appearance. Perhaps never in musical history has so great a fuss been made about so few bars of music . . . The worst of controversy of this kind is that it makes it difficult for musicians, even a century and a half later, to judge the offending passage purely on its merits." I am inclined to agree with my friends, Anderson and McKinney, who in their excellent book

Music in History, reach a conclusion that was previously arrived at by Ernest Newman: "A great deal has been written about this, in an attempt to explain that it must be great because it is incomprehensible. The most obvious explanation would seem to be that Mozart simply did not achieve what he intended; the harmonies of these opening measures in this quartet remain as 'confused, obscure, and artificial' as they were thought to be by the critics of the time. It is merely a piece of writing that does not come off when played."

Once we get beyond the so-called mystical adagio introduction the music is all that we can ask it to be; and for this reason the quartet remains among the finest that the composer has left us.

Columbia has not been too successful in their recording of this work. The previous set by the Gordon String Quartet was a highly unconvincing performance. The present set, while a far better performance and recording, is likewise disappointing when compared to the album made by the **Budapest String Quartet**. The Kolisches play this music too much in the manner of a late Beethoven quartet; they do not begin to exploit the lyrical graciousness and warmth of the music as well as the Budapests do. One could not refute the fine musicianship of these four players; the technical mastery long associated with this quartet is in evidence. It is quite possible that if the Budapest set did not exist, one would be inclined to accept this performance as a satisfactory one. But it remains a fact that the sensitive listener who makes comparisons is apt to find himself drawn toward the previous set, despite the fact that it is not as brilliantly recorded. It might be observed that the excellence of the few Mozart releases that the Budapests have made should prompt some more Mozart releases by them in the near future. We are badly in need of a good performance of the great *D minor Quartet*, K. 421.

—P. H. R.

MOZART: *Serenade*, for Thirteen Wind Instruments, K. 361; played by Edwin Fisher's Chamber Orchestra. Victor set M-743, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ The annotator tells us that this work belongs to the period just prior to Mozart's

break with the Archbishop of Salzburg. The Archbishop was a striking example of the ecclesiastical tyrant, and Mozart had more than just cause to chafe under the bit of his patronage. In the fall of 1780, Mozart was commissioned to compose for the Carnival season at Munich a serious opera, *Idomeneo*, based on a libretto selected by the court. Some say he wrote this serenade for members of the Munich orchestra during the time of preparation for the production of his opera. Most of Mozart's compositions of this type, divertimenti, serenades, etc., were written as music of diversion and although many of them are attractive and well worth cultivating, few equal or excel this work in its beautiful and expressive structure. It is not



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only a work of striking sentiment, but one that is highly interesting for its unusual scoring. It was originally written for 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 basset horns, 4 horns, 2 bassoons and a double bassoon (or a double bass). The instrumentalists playing the basset horn parts sound here more like ordinary clarinets to me than to some basset horns I have heard. Two movements are omitted in this performance — the first minuet and a *Romance*.

If this serenade was composed for members of the Munich orchestra, one can well believe the wind section of that organization enjoyed themselves at the expense of the string section. For, as Mr. Veinus, our annotator, notes "the opening movement has a full-bodied symphonic structure, and the adagio a sober and profoundly expressive interweaving of melodic lines . . ." This was music to incite the respect of new and old musical friends. It has brightness, sonority, spontaneity, and freshness. It was a worthy successor to the important *Sinfonia Concertante in E flat, K. 364*, which Mozart wrote the previous year.

An ardent Mozartean can rave on, but one should not overlook the fact that as fine as the work is, and few will deny its many excellent qualities, not all of it is on the same plane as the opening allegro and the adagio. There are lighter sections—two minuets (only one of which is recorded here) and a final rondo—which are gay, carefree, and by and large only music of diversion. But to be diverted by Mozart is generally a delightful experience, particularly when he is being as well played as in the present case. And so, if you need further stimulation or prompting to hear this music, take my word for it, it will repay your effort.

Edwin Fischer has given us better proof prior to this of his abilities as a Mozart interpreter; there are a series of concerto recordings by him which are eminently satisfying, and there is his performance as conductor of the early *Symphony in B flat, K. 319*. Here his performance, though satisfactory, nevertheless shows a lack of rehearsal.

A previous version of this serenade has long been available on Decca discs by an

unnamed instrumental group under the direction of Fritz Stiedry. Stiedry includes the less interesting first minuet which follows the opening allegro, but excludes the charming fifth movement, a theme and variations. Stiedry's tempi are somewhat on the quick side, hence his performance is less expressive than that by Fischer, who does not hasten his tempi. Further, the recording of the Stiedry discs dates back nearly a decade and in lifting the music to a fitting tonal level one finds the surface noise of the discs unpleasant. Hence, one welcomes the release of this better recorded and finer played set. —P. H. R.

TURINA: *Second Trio, Op. 76* (three sides); and ARBOS: *Seguidillas Gitanas, Op. 1* (two sides); played by The Russian Trio. Three 12-inch discs; a private recording sponsored by Steinway, New York. Price \$3.00.

▲ Here is a pleasant surprise. We have long been an admirer of Turina's *First Trio*, which the Court of Belgium Trio recorded some years ago for Columbia in Europe. The idiom of the present work, unlike that of the *First Trio*, is not nationalistic. It presents a more intimate aspect of Turina's art, and confirms his gift for sustained poetic expressiveness. It is not a long work and is divided into three distinct movements. It is surely reflective of a more tranquil world than that of Spain today. One is struck by the fastidiousness of the writing, the seriousness of purpose. This is music of melodic distinction, free from atmospheric effects and extraneous coloring.

It has been said of Arbos that the characteristics of national Spanish music are employed by him with the happiest effect. This is true of the present work, which is based on the melodies and rhythms of Spanish Gypsy dances. This is a smoothly contrived and wholly unpretentious piece of music, which, while it may not lend itself to endless repetition, should supply a good chamber-music encore.

The Russian Trio, composed of Nina Mesirow Minchin (piano), Hans Muenzer (violin), and Enno Bolognini (cello), play with fine tonal quality and finesse. The recording, made, according to the labels,

by Victor, is good although not on a wide dynamic scale.

—P. H. R.

Keyboard

BRAHMS: *Three Rhapsodies* — *Op. 79*, Nos. 1 and 2; and *Op. 119*, No. 4; played by Egon Petri, piano. Columbia set X-183, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ *Rhapsody* is the perfect name for these works. All start with a vigorous burst, all are lyric, songful pieces of music, and all swell with the exuberance that their title implies. *Op. 79* was composed in 1879. It consists of two *Rhapsodies* which are similar and yet very different. The rhapsodic element is present in both, both are compactly and sturdily created, and one feels in them the strength and virility of the composer. No. 1, in B minor, however, is much more accessible. For one thing, it falls more gratefully on the ears than the knotty *Second*, being more pianistic. I do not think that Brahms solved all the problems he set himself in the latter; its development is too diffuse, and the pianistic treatment is at times muddy and uninteresting. But one cannot forget the bold opening (forceful and romantic; has it not much in common with the opening measures of Schumann's *Kreisleriana*?) and the wonders of the beautiful trio. More polished, more fluent and less intellectual is the first of the set. In what is a condensed sonata form the composer lets the cup flow over with the fertility of his imagination. This is a miniature tone poem; it is "big" music, and calls for an interpreter with a grand, full tone who is not afraid of massing big volumes of sound.

My favorite of the three is the last, in E flat. It is also the last original piano work that Brahms composed (1892), and is stamped with the autumnal tenderness that is typical of the period of the *B minor Quintet* and *Clarinet Trio*. As in the other *Rhapsodies*, a vigorous theme is immediately announced. Soon, however, this gives place to a lyric statement, enchantingly harmonized with arpeggiated chords. Petri's performance is perfect. He seems to identify himself with this music to a greater degree than he does with *Op. 79*—and his performance of the latter is the best that one

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can obtain on records. Bachaas has recorded *Op. 79*, and has done excellent work, but his exposition is less imaginative than Petri's, and he does not enjoy comparable recording. Among single discs there is a good performance of the *G minor Rhapsody* by Rubinstein (Victor 14196). Rubinstein is a little cleaner than Petri, but he does not make the development as interesting: his very cleanness brings into relief the turgid writing for the piano. Petri does not care if occasionally he drops a note, being more concerned with getting into the heart of the composition. And that, in the present set, he does.

—H. C. S.

PADEREWSKI "GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY" ALBUM — SCHUBERT: *Moment Musical No. 2 in A flat* (disc 17-699); MOZART: *Rondo in A minor*, K. 511 (disc 15431); CHOPIN: *Polonaise in A flat*, *Op. 53* (disc 14974); and HAYDN: *Theme and Variations in F minor* (disc 14727); played by Ignace Jan Paderewski. Victor set M-748, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ This set, as Victor proudly states, is the continuation of "fifty golden concert years". As a sentimental gesture it will please the multitude of the pianist's admirers. A cold, critical appraisal, however, will not find the greatest of piano playing in the discs. Two of the selections—the Mozart *Rondo* and the Chopin *Polonaise*—have been in circulation for some time, and have been reviewed in these pages. The *Moment Musical* was recorded in England when Paderewski made the motion picture *Moonlight Sonata*. That was about five years ago, I believe. As a recording it is none too good, and the surfaces are poor. It is nicely played. Neither this nor the exceptionally beautiful work by Mozart taxes his strength. As previously pointed out, the performance of the Haydn piece could scarcely be called Haydnesque, since it indulges in all kinds of mannered rubati and other features of Chopin playing. At the same time, since this is one of the composer's most romantic compositions, there may be many who will enjoy this kind of treatment.

The presentation of the *Polonaise* is altogether unfortunate and I cannot help

wishing that Victor had selected something else to include in the album. I do not wish to be in any way patronizing, but Paderewski did not have the power to play this difficult work. There is a certain dignity about his approach, but the old elasticity and technique are gone. At best it is a pathetic reminder of how he must once have played it.

Victor has left the last pocket of the album empty. It is reserved for Paderewski's most famous record—No. 16250, which couples the adagio of the *Moonlight Sonata* with the pianist's own *Minuet in G*.

—H. C. S.

RACHMANINOFF: *Fantasia*, *Op. 5* (*Suite No. 1*); and *Vocalise* (arr. Babin); played by Vitya Vronsky and Victor Babin, duo-pianists. Victor set M-741, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ The dedication of the *Fantasia* reads "à Monsieur P. Tschaikowsky." Unfortunately Tschaikowsky died before hearing the work, which was composed in 1893; he would have been pleased by several spots where his young admirer unconsciously imitated him. Not that there is direct quotation, but the idiom is often similar. Thus the chords at the opening of the second movement suggest those in *Romeo and Juliet*.

None of the four movements is in strict form, and each is prefaced by a title that suggests some kind of program. In order, the names are *Barcarolle*, *La Nuit . . . L'Amour*, *Larmes*, and *Pâques*. The *Fantasia* is typical Rachmaninoff. In the *Barcarolle* is found a lovely opening theme that is developed but little. This is also true of the other movements: one notices many fine ideas, but little comes of them. There is not what might be called a thematic overflow, and the suite as a whole is a good example of slim material elaborated so skilfully that one is not conscious of the underlying paucity. After several hearings the lack of something solid becomes more apparent, and for that reason I would suggest that the set be not played too often. But while the composer does not have much to say, he says it superlatively. He is a master when it comes to the technique of piano composition; note the enchanting

play of the instruments in the third movement. As in the piano pieces that Victor released last month, the skill of the writing makes the music more interesting than it intrinsically is. If one analyzes the suite carefully, a certain sameness and monotony of mood and melody will be apparent. Some of the selections are already dated; the second movement is old-fashioned, recalling the post-Romantic efforts of Arensky and Taneieff. The last movement will inevitably call to mind the *Coronation Scene* from *Boris Godounoff*. Incidentally, a good machine will be necessary to reproduce *Pâques* satisfactorily, for it rings out at a steady triple fortissimo that will shatter if inferior equipment is used.

Vronsky and Babin play brilliantly. Their hard, bright quality brings out the arabesques and embroidery of the writing in admirable fashion. The music is difficult, but they have little trouble with the technical problems. I noticed some deviation from the printed score: some of their phrasings were not indicated in the music, and there is one section (page 20 of the Gutheil score) where the second piano does not play some of the accented notes (at least, I did not hear them). Babin's arrangement of the familiar *Vocalise* is in good taste.

The album boasts fine recording, but there is more surface noise than usual.

Instrumental

BACH: *Suite No. 1, in G major; Suite No. 6, in D major*; played by Pablo Casals, cello. The Bach Society Vol. 7, Victor set M-742, seven discs, price \$7.50.

▲ In December, 1939, Victor released M-611, which contained the second and third suites for unaccompanied cello, also played by Casals. Those were first complete recordings, as are the present. Needless to say, in Casals we have one of the greatest cellists of all time as interpreter. This is fortunate, for music like this, which is among the most abstract and purely intellectual ever composed, can be extremely dry and uninteresting. To get anything at all out of it requires the greatest technique, the warmest tone, and the deepest insight.

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These Casals has. His playing is not as perfect as of yore—one notices occasional slips in intonation — but his smoothness, musicianship, and style still equal those of any living cellist. I do not profess to be overly fond of the suites at present, but if more can be derived from them than what I was able to obtain, there is no doubt that Casals' performance will bring it out. Music like this, of course, requires endless hearings. At one time, to draw an analogy, Bach's violin sonatas seemed uninspired to this reviewer, but many hearings and careful study enabled him to derive much enjoyment from them. The same may occur here.

Each of the two suites has six movements—a prelude, an allemande, a courante, a sarabande, a minuet (a gavotte in *Suite No. 6*) and a gigue. J. A. Westrup's excellent notes supply a short analysis of each. We would like to mention especially the flowing courante and gigue of the first suite, and the prelude, courante and gavotte of the sixth. All are rewarding musically. The gavotte will be familiar to piano students, for its arrangement is often used by beginners.

The recording is uncommonly realistic.

—H. C. S.

BLOCH: *Baal Shem, Three Pictures of Chasidic Life* (3 sides); and **MILHAUD** (arr. Levy): *Sumare from Saudades do Brazil*; **FALLA** (arr. Szigeti): *Danse du Meunier from Three Cornered Hat* (1 side); played by Joseph Szigeti accompanied by Andor Farkas at the piano. Columbia set X-188, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ This is one of Bloch's racial compositions. In it he seeks to interpret three moods that dominated the life and thought of the strictly orthodox Jew for centuries. The intervals used in this music are similar to those heard in the Jewish ritual. In 1913, Bloch wrote his *Three Jewish Poems*, for orchestra, to the memory of his father. In 1923, he wrote *Baal Shem* (meaning in a loose translation—"extremely pious") in memory of his mother. The work is divided into three titled movements—*Vidui*, *Nigun*, and *Simchas Torah*. The first section, says the annotator, "portrays the mood

of contrition, with a characteristic falling fifth of the Jewish ritual song. The second, *Nigun*, is an improvisation. Here the mood is aspiration, reflected in the motto of the rising fourth. This movement is also the most popular of the three among violinists. The third, *Simchas Torah*, pictures a joyful, festive mood." The annotator points out further that in all the movements the rhythm is as free as the Jewish chant that inspires Bloch's music.

Nigun has been featured by a great many violinists. There are at least four or five recordings in existence of this music, one of which Szigeti made a number of years ago. Why violinists prefer *Nigun* to *Vidui* is something this reviewer has never been able to comprehend; maybe it's more interesting to perform but I, for one, would not agree that it is more interesting to hear. *Vidui* is a song of penitence, and the mood is one in which Bloch has always been most successful. There is a strong feeling of sincerity in this song of sorrow, not one of pity. *Nigun* is a more diffuse piece, and although effective in the hands of an artist like Szigeti, it still leaves one with the feeling that it is not as definite an expression as the first or the third pieces. *Simchas Torah* seems less inspired than the other parts of the work. Each piece occupies a single record face. Szigeti's interpretation of this music shows a sympathetic understanding of the prevalent emotionalism of the three moods. One could not ask for a better performance. And his accompanist does equal justice to the piano parts.

At first glance one might dismiss the fillers on the odd side as encores, which, of course, in this case they virtually are. But these pieces which show off the violinist's virtuoso abilities at their best. Both arrangements are extremely tricky ones calling for most of the technical devices in the violinist's bag—double stops, guitar imitations, harmonics, and great rhythmic elasticity. Szigeti makes them sound all too easy, which is another way of saying he does a swell job. But, in the last analysis, it'll be the Bloch work which will invite most listeners to purchase the set.

—P. G.

Voice

CHARPENTIER: *Louise*—*Depuis le jour*; DEBUSSY: *L'Enfant Prodigue*: *Air de Lia*; sung by Dorothy Maynor, soprano, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Victor disc 17698, price \$1.00.

▲ Still another *Depuis le jour* and in many respects the best of them. This extremely difficult aria seems to have an irresistible fascination for sopranos of all types and persuasions. It is often done creditably, but rarely entirely satisfactorily. There have been countless recordings of it, but of the ones I know none can be recommended without some reservations. My own favorite has long been an old acoustic Columbia by Mary Garden. The aria is cut and the recording is weak, but the voice had youth and vitality. The qualities I especially admire in it are missing in the same lady's electrical Victor version: and here the aria is transposed down a tone. Tonally the loveliest recording is undoubtedly Melba's acoustic. Bori's disc dates from the earliest days of electrical reproduction. Here the aria is sung a little too fast, and the high tessitura proves embarrassing to the otherwise admirable soprano. Ninon Vallin fares better in Columbia's abridged *Louise* album, though she too is a little uncomfortable, as evidenced by the slight unsteadiness in her voice. More recently we have had *Depuis le jour* by Helen Jepson, by Grace Moore and by Jeannette MacDonald, all recording for Victor. Miss Maynor brings to the music more real conviction than any of them, and her voice has a youthful quality matched only by the early Garden. She has a happy way of breathing into her high tones which gives to this air just the note of ecstasy it needs, and there is no evidence that she finds any technical difficulties in it. For perfection her diction should be pointed up a little more, though her words are understandable and she seems to know what they mean. Mr. Ormandy's accompaniment is inclined to be "trick," what with a fancy portamento in the strings and certainly more bells than I have ever heard in Charpentier's orchestra.

The early Debussy aria was recorded several years ago by Rose Bampton, whose version is probably the only one available in this country today. A magnificent acoustic Victor by the contralto Gerville-Réache was re-issued two or three years ago by one of the historic societies, but such editions are limited. Miss Maynor's singing is here no less appealing than in the *Louise* aria. Her voice has been better recorded on both sides of this disc than on either of her previous releases, and the balance with the orchestra is good.

—P. M.

A VICTOR CHENKIN RECITAL: *Hebrew Lamentation* (Aronson-Gorochov), *Mai Komashma Lon* (Raisin-Fisherman) (disc 17258-D); *Kadish* (arr. Kipnis), *Bim Bam* (arr. Fisherman) (disc 17259-D); *Scholoch S'Udes* (Ritterband), *Freilachs* (arr. Strimer), *Der Rebbe Elimelech* (arr. E. H. Cohen), *Sba! . . . Stil!* (arr. Strimer) (disc 17260-D); and

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Schnaiderl (Kohn), *Batlen* (Kohn); sung by Victor Chenkin, accompanied by Vladimir Brenner. Columbia set M-435, four 10-inch discs, price \$3.50.

▲ I thoroughly enjoyed this album, and believe that it contains some of the finest bits of character singing to be found on records. The songs that Chenkin sings represent various phases of Jewish life and thought and are perfect representations of the old-world orthodox Jew; a type that is not very common in America. All of the selections except the first are sung in Yiddish; thus it will be difficult for those unfamiliar with the language to derive the utmost from the set. At the same time, Chenkin acts his characters so faithfully and his vocal inflections are so suggestive, that all should enjoy the music. Chenkin, who has made several New York appearances (he was well known in Europe), possesses an excellent voice and is able to change its timbre at will.

Emotionally the selections range from the dignity and impassioned qualities of the *Lamentation* to the incoherent mouthings of a man very much in his cups. The former, sung in Hebrew, is the lament of the prophet Jeremiah. It is followed by the soliloquy of a rabbinical student who muses despondently about his poverty. The next song should not be called *Kadish*; the *Kadish* is a prayer for the dead, which the song is not. However, the opening words of the prayer do make their appearance toward the end.

Most people will probably find the rest of the songs much more to their liking. *Bim Bam* depicts a Jew at a festive gathering. He drinks to the health of the hostess (business of smacking of lips). He keeps on drinking and toasting (chuckles and vast good nature). He drinks to the dead (maudlin tears). He gets very drunk; his voice thickens and fades to a mumble. Chenkin does this perfectly—so perfectly, in fact, that I felt myself getting tipsy also. My favorites are *Der Rebbe Elimelech* and *Sba! . . . Stil! (Quiet! . . . Still!)* The former recalls *Old King Cole*, for the rabbi calls for his fiddlers, his drummers and his cymbal players. Here is found another intoxicating sequence, for this rab-

bi also drinks a little too much, and by the time the song is over he has his fiddlers piping, his drummers fiddling, and his pipers drumming. Concluding the set are *Schneiderl (Little Tailor)* and *Batlen* (a Hebrew word meaning preoccupied). Both are very enjoyable.

These records are more than novelties. They are well sung, well recorded, and are full of interesting and appealing tunes. They abound in vivid characters that are true to life, and represent deep and sympathetic insight into certain facets of Jewish culture. I hardly need add that they are performed in an authentic manner.

—H. C. S.

HOOK: *Down the Burn*; and LEMON: *My Ain Folk*; sung by Marjorie Lawrence with Felix Wolfes at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 2147, price 75c.

▲ There are plenty of fine Scottish songs and it is to be hoped that Miss Lawrence will see fit to record some more. Also it might not be a bad idea if the companies were to get a good baritone or tenor to record a few of those written specifically for masculine voice.

Down the Burn was composed by James Hook (1746-1825) and was first published in the *New Scottish Orpheus*, Vol. 1, a collection of Scottish songs that were new when our grandparents were children. Both it and the more modern *My Ain Folk* are generally regarded as folk songs today; in fact the former has been published in folk collections.

Miss Lawrence is in fine voice in both these songs, and she brings to them expressive sincerity and conviction. The only criticism we have to offer is the consistently audible sound of the singer's intake of breath; perhaps this can be eliminated in future recordings by different microphone technique. The recording balance is excellent.

—P. G.

A MAGGIE TEYTE RECITAL (Limited Edition)—BERLIOZ: *Le spectre de la rose*, and *L'Absence*; DUPARC: *L'Invitation du Voyage*, and *Phidylé*; DEBUSSY: *Prose Lyriques—De Reve, De Fleurs, De Soir*; and *Le Jet d'eau*; the first four with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Leslie Heward; the last four with piano accompaniment

by Gerald Moore. In album. This set, privately recorded in England for Rimington, Van Wyck, Ltd., is sponsored in this country by The Gramophone Shop. Price \$10.00.

▲ Those who are familiar with the Maggie Teyte and Alfred Cortot album of Debussy songs (Victor set M-322) do not need to be told what a gifted singer she is and how searchingly revealing is her artistry. These records were originally sponsored in England by Rimington, Van Wyck. They were made last fall, I have been given to understand, under the most trying circumstances. Indeed Miss Teyte has written a friend of mine here that several sides were completed during air raids. This, of course, is not apparent in the recordings; none of those who participate give any indication that they knew, if they actually did, that such conditions prevailed beyond the sound-proof walls of the chamber where the recording took place. Miss Teyte is completely composed, completely the mistress of her art, and the conductor and pianist in each case are as conscientiously absorbed in their tasks as is she.

Of the songs recorded here, the most important would seem to me those by Berlioz. Both give striking evidence of that composer's ability to mate a poetic text with a perfect musical setting, and to add nuance and color in a perfect orchestral accompaniment. Duparc supplied orchestral arrangements of a number of his songs, and their performance with orchestra adds much to atmosphere and mood. Yet, it can be said that *L'Invitation au Voyage* is equally impressive with its piano background. As beautifully as Miss Teyte sings *Phidylé*, I must confess I prefer this song sung by a man; it is a man's song. Continuing her Debussy series, Miss Teyte sings the first, third and fourth songs of the *Proses lyriques*. *De Grève*, the second of the group, was sung by the soprano in her Victor set. Debussy wrote the texts of these songs himself, and there has been much controversy as to their adaptability to music. Oscar Thompson in his book on Debussy says: "The literary basis is a variety of symbolism, bordering on allegory, that has been described in one quarter as

far-fetched and full of studied abstruseness; in another as somewhat juvenile, but essentially delicate in its imagery". *Le Jet d'eau* is an earlier song, one of the *Cinq Poèmes de Baudelaire*. Thompson finds something of Borodin in this atmospheric composition.

Miss Teyte brings to all these songs illuminating and highly imaginative interpretations. Her lovely voice flows with an exquisite ease. One forgets vocalism in listening to this soprano; she gives the impression of being a part of the whole, rather than the singer anxious to be regarded as a soloist. This is a rare art, and one that provides many hours of repeated pleasure. Mr. Howard has been particularly successful in his orchestral direction; the

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instrumental clarity is most gratifying. The recording is ideally achieved. It would be a most appropriate gesture if Victor would endeavor to gain permission to bring these records out in this country.

—P. H. R.

MASCAGNI: *Cavalleria Rusticana*—*Tu qui Santuzza?* and *No, No, Turiddu*; sung by Dusolina Giannini and Beniamino Gigli with the La Scala Orchestra, conducted by Carlo Sabajno. Victor disc 17697, price \$1.00.

▲ Mascagni's *Cavalleria* is a "dime thriller" among operas; one suspects that its story contributed as much to its success as its music, although the latter is unquestionably the best all-around job that the composer accomplished. There are moments in his other operas, but not the consistent flow of good melody that we find in *Cavalleria*. Santuzza has long been regarded as one of Giannini's best roles; she brings to it the requisite dramatic intensity. Hers is an uncompromising portrayal of the part, one in which there is little composure and tenderness. Of course, Santuzza is a very much wronged young lady, and in a community like the one she lived in, especially in the 'nineties, her plight must have held her up to considerable ridicule among the neighbors. Even Mama Lucia seems uncertain whether the subject of her plight should be pursued as fervently as Santa would have it. Jealousy plays a strong part also, for Santa has not only been betrayed but she has a rival. The Italian temperament is one that suffers strongly through jealousy, particularly among the Sicilians. In Italy this opera is acted out with all the "dime thriller" technique imaginable. It is not uncommon in this duet, in which Santa seeks a reckoning with Turiddu, to find the soprano literally sweeping up the stage with her hair.

Although there is no suggestion of overdramatizing in the present recording, there is plenty of dramatic intensity in Giannini's singing. Gigli is in fine fettle, and strangely, does not indulge in any emotional excesses. One would have welcomed less tautness in the American soprano's tones, but it can be said that this is among the best recordings that she has made. It is the

best version of the duet on records to date. It is complete except for the short song of Lola which breaks it up for a few minutes in the opera. At the end of the duet, Turiddu throws Santa to the ground, and she reviles him as he flees from the stage. The two singers convey the action without undue theatrics.

The recording, made, I believe, in Italy in 1936, is very good.

—P. G.

SIBELIUS: *Aus banger Brust*, Op. 50, No. 4; *Langsamt som kvällsskyn*, Op. 61, No. 1; sung by Marian Anderson, contralto, with piano accompaniment by Kosti Vehanen. Victor 10-inch disc 2146, price 75c.

▲ The importance of the Sibelius songs—whether considered as songs or as works of Sibelius—is a question still to be answered, for, in this country at least, we know only a handful of them. Miss Anderson has been one of the Finnish composer's most active propagandists in recital, and the present disc brings the total of her Sibelius recordings up to five. I am inclined to think that *Langsamt som kvällsskyn* is the best of the lot, though this is actually a matter of pure personal preference. Here, as in the other four songs, the singer is at her best. The voice is clear, fluent and steady: the vocal line is limpid and graceful.

Aus banger Brust is a setting of a passionate poetic outburst from Richard Dehmel's collection of verses entitled *Weib und Welt*. It presents a picture of a woman deserted by her lover, but not by her love, waiting in a dew-spangled moonlit garden. Sibelius in his setting has presented the forlorn hope of the lonely girl rather than the atmospheric word-painting of the poem.

Langsamt som kvällsskyn has just what *Aus banger Brust* lacks, for here the whole emphasis is placed upon atmosphere and mood. The poem is by Karl August Tavastjerna (1860-1898), a Finnish poet who wrote in the Swedish language. Its meaning is something like this: "Slowly as the fading purple twilight over the shimmering inlet; softly as the dying breeze; faintly as the echo from the distant cliffs—so shall I forget you, who have given to my life color, spring and music."

This recording was made several years ago in Europe—I suspect at the same time as the three other Sibelius songs—but it still sounds good. The balance is a bit in the singer's favor, though this may be actually the fault of the pianist rather than the engineer, since the instrumental tone is inclined to be somewhat brittle. The reproduction of the voice could hardly be better.

—P. M.

SELECTIONS FROM SIX WAGNERIAN OPERAS: *Der Fliegende Holländer*—Steersman's Song; and *Siegfried*—*Hammerlied*: *Ho-Ho! Schmiede, mein Hammer* (disc 17725); *Tannhäuser*—*Rome Narrative* (disc 17727) and *Tannhäuser's Hymn to Venus* (disc 17726—B side); Lauritz Melchior and the Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Edwin McArthur. *Lobengrin*—*In fernem Land* (Narrative) (disc 17726-A side); *Die Meistersinger*—*Am stillen Herd*, and *Preislied* (disc 17728); Lauritz Melchior and the Philadelphia Orchestra, conduct-

ed by Eugene Ormandy. *Götterdämmerung*—*Zu neuen Thaten* (duet Act 1) (disc 17729); Kirsten Flagstad and Lauritz Melchior with San Francisco Opera Orchestra, conducted by Edwin McArthur. Victor set M-749, price \$5.50.

▲ Melchior's is the kind of voice that comes once in a generation; it is doubtful that there is a finer Heldtenor living today. Here we have fine evidence of his pre-eminent masculine strength and fervor, of his unusual ability to color tones and convey tenderness and feeling. There is evidence here also, however, of a tightening of tone; evidence that this fine voice is not as free as it was a few years back. But Melchior still has the power to thrill, and there is an artistic maturity in these discs which will enhance their value to his many admirers.

Melchior is accredited with saying that the role of Walther in *Die Meistersinger* is too lyrical for his voice. We do not know of any performance of Walther that

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he has sung in this country. On the same premise, one would be inclined to say that the *Steersman's Song** from *The Flying Dutchman* was less suitable to him than some of the other selections he sings. His voicing of Walther's two arias, the lovely *Am stillen Herd* from the first act, in which Walther conveys what he has learned from his master and from nature, and the *Prize Song* are so splendid that one would be inclined to question the validity of the singer's disinclination to include this role in his repertoire. Perhaps the *Prize Song* could have been more spaciouly recorded, for unquestionably the tempo has to be stepped up in order to include it on a single face. Although Torsten Ralf is no substitute for Melchior, there is much to be said for Beecham's orchestral direction and the spacing of the aria in his recording. But if one examines the long list of recorded Prize Songs, it will be noted that most have been made on a single side.

Both *Siegfried* and *Tannhäuser* are among Melchior's best roles. The older recording of his *Hymn to Venus*, from the first act of the latter opera (Victor disc 7656), has been withdrawn. Not so, however his *Rome Narrative*, which begins "Imbrunst im Herzen" (page 350 — Breitkopf and Härtel) and ends with the line "nun süsse Gottin, leite mich!" (page 363). The older recording (Victor disc 9707 — made in 1930) is still available. Vocally, it is in many ways preferable to the new recording.

We have been unable to locate any previous recording by Melchior of Lohengrin's *Narrative*; the present is a most welcome addition to this tenor's Wagneriana. The duet from the opening act of *Götterdämmerung*, in which Brünnhilde bids her spouse farewell and Godspeed, is superbly sung by Flagstad and Melchior. The soprano is in top form, and the ease and fluency with which she encompasses the difficult tessitura here are thrilling. One can understand why McArthur, her accompanist and the conductor of this recording, was prompted to utter a sotto voce "Bravo" at the end. If we'd been in his shoes, we'd have probably yelled it much louder.

*The choral background here is taken from the last act. Purists may disapprove, but the arrangement is effective.

The recording here is somewhat uneven. The best and most satisfactory ones are those done with the Philadelphia and the San Francisco Opera Orchestras. Those accomplished with the Victor Symphony are realistic enough, but the focus of the voice is less favorable to the singer, and there is evidence of a slight echo in the place where these recordings were made. But here we have some worthy examples of the artistry of one of the world's greatest voices as it was in the year 1940. We also have some worthy examples of that same voice in early years, and if we prefer some of the previous recordings he has made of such selections as the *Hammerlied* from *Siegfried* and the *Tannhäuser* excerpts it is because those records have long been fond possessions.

—P. G.

Other Recordings

GOUNOD (arr. Riviere): *Faust—Selections*; London Palladium Orch., conducted by Richard Crea. Victor disc 363-88, price 75c.

FLETCHER: *Bal Masque*; and WALDTEUFEL: *Mon Reve*; Victor Concert Orch. Victor disc 36389, price 75c.

POPY: *Ballet Suite*; Grand Concert Orch. Victor 10-inch disc 27253, price 50c.

SWING YOUR PARTNER — Square Dances and Quadrilles; Bill Dickinson's Colonials, calls by Paul Conklin. Victor set C-34, three discs, price \$2.75.

TRADITIONAL: *Evening Bells*, and *Kama Song*; Don Cossack Choir. Columbia disc 7370-M, price \$1.00.

Swing Music Notes

Enzo Archetti

● On February 6, Blue Note had another recording session—this time with a quartet consisting of Edmond Hall, Meade Lux Lewis, Israel Crosby, and Charlie Christian. One of the sides is a four-minute blues, a clarinet solo by Hall. The records are scheduled for release in the early part of March. They are being awaited with unusual interest.

Latest of Columbia's reissues include an album of Teschemaker discs, including two rare Paramount sides: *Sister Kate* and *Nobody's Sweetheart*. Inci-

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dentally, a heartwarming sense of camaraderie seems to exist between Columbia, U.H.C.A., and Jazz Information. Some of the records in the new Tesch album were originally issued by U.H.C.A. and, in fact, are still available under that label. Jazz Information, which recently went in for limited editions, after selling out its first issue, made available to U.H.C.A. its masters of *Chimes Blues* and *Canal Street Blues* by King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band and they are now procurable as U.H.C.A. 67-68. Previously, some early Columbia reissues had included records already issued under the U.H.C.A. label. We like to see such a display of cooperation. It suggests that the best interests of the jazz lover, rather than commercial considerations, are being thought of first.

A brand of records is scheduled to make an appearance within a few weeks. Viking records will be sponsored by the Curtis Publishing Company and they will be sold on about 80,000 newstands throughout the country. Two special features will make them different from other records: they will be made of a new plastic material and they will sell for twenty-five cents. The first release is *Frenci and Here's My Heart* by Jack Teagarden's Orchestra. A new record will appear every two weeks and each will feature a different name orchestra.

Incidentally, Jack Teagarden's band was out in the cold until recently when it signed up with Decca and recorded some new works on January 30. The collapse of the U. S. Record Corporation, with whom Teagarden was signed, caused the temporary embarrassment.

Fletcher Henderson has retired as staff arranger for Benny Goodman and is now fronting his own band again but this time the band is being sponsored by Benny Goodman himself. The personnel is Jonah Jones, Russell Smith, Bob Williams, trumpets; Freddy Robinson, trombone; George Irish and Rudy Powell, saxes; Herb Cowans, drums; Ted Sturgis, bass; and Fletcher on piano. After an engagement at New York's Roseland, the new band moved into the Uptown Café Society for an indefinite stay. It replaced Teddy Wilson, who moved into the Hotel Ambassador in Chicago.

Sidney Bechet is back in New York after an engagement at the Log Cabin in Fonda, N. Y. With a lineup consisting of Wellman Braud, Cliff Jackson, and Eugene Moore, among others, he is now at the well-known Harlem Club, the Mingo. With a different group including Red Allen and J. C. Higgenbotham, Sidney cut four sides for Victor.

Duke Ellington is still on the West Coast. Sonny Greer was forced to leave temporarily because of illness. He was replaced by a young drummer, just out of high school, who refuses to be known by any name except Sonny Greer. So he is being billed as "Sonny Greer".

The latest addition to Duke's band is his son, Mercer, who has joined as arranger to assist Billy Strayhorn and the Duke himself. Son Mercer has already gained something of a reputation as a composer with several works. His latest is *Five Rhapsody*, a blues, which had its premiere in January on a Bob Crosby program and displayed considerable individuality, notwithstanding the very obvious Ellington influence.

March, 1941

In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

AAAA—*Lady in the Dark* Album. Hildegard and Robert Hannon. Orchestra and chorus dir. by Harry Sosnik. Decca set 208.

● One of the most widely discussed musical shows of recent seasons is *Lady in the Dark*. With a score by Kurt Weill, this "play with music" by Moss Hart is as ingenious and effective a piece as has graced Broadway in many a day. In the starring role, Gertrude Lawrence gives a performance of amazing vitality and sensitivity, but her song numbers reveal her once pleasing (if none too entrancing) voice to be a shadow of its former self. It is therefore fortunate that Decca has chosen the eminently capable Hildegard for its album of selections from the show. As for the music itself, the Kurt Weill cultists will give it their usual acclaim, while a few old meanies like ourselves will call it moderately effective, if painfully unoriginal and uninspired, and definitely inferior to the work of (at the very least) half a dozen native American

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composers. Characteristically, the only number in the show that is even faintly memorable, *The Saga of Jenny*, is strongly reminiscent of about eight tunes that will immediately come to mind, including *Edie Was a Lady*. Nevertheless, as presented in the show and as recorded here by Hildegard, it is extremely effective. Nor can one deny that the lyric by Ira Gershwin is a corking good one. Hildegard sings it more slowly than does Lawrence, and is a little bit more refined than is entirely necessary. In *This Is New*, (a tune filched from Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro*) and *My Ship*, she is heard to equally good effect, with the orchestral backgrounds by Sosnik invariably excellent. Robert Hannon and the chorus give a good account of themselves in *Girl of the Moment*.

AAA—*Embraceable You* and *I Never Knew*. Teddy Wilson and his Orchestra. Columbia 35905.

● Teddy Wilson and Helen Ward share honors in the very swell *Embraceable You*. Teddy's magical fingers were never more adroit and skillful than here, while Helen Ward's vocal squeezes every drop from the music. The whole style of the record, by the way, is apparently copied from (or strongly influenced by) the Lee Wiley-Gershwin recordings issued by Liberty in an album some time ago. The principal difference is that Wilson's pianistics are a bit more meticulous than were those of Jos Buskin's. *I Never Knew* is a rather disorderly and undistinguished reverse.

AAA—*Dr. Livingston, I Presume*, and *When the Quail Come Back to San Quentin*. Artie Shaw and his Gramercy 5. Victor 27289.

● The Dr. Livingston thing is quite a humorous affair, with this corking little group from the Shaw band giving forth with some business that's plenty solid. Shaw flits around as gracefully and effortlessly as a humming bird, while John Guarnieri on harpsichord and Al Hindrickson on guitar also are scintillating. The whole thing winds up, for no particularly good reason, with a frenzied *Kavatski*. The rather labored humor of the title of the reverse prepares one for an unappetizing dish, nor is one disappointed.

AAA—*When Cootie Left the Duke*, and *Petite*. Raymond Scott and his Orchestra. Columbia 35940.

● *When Cootie Left the Duke* is an earnest and, on the whole, successful effort to duplicate the feeling and style of Ellington. It's a fine theme that Scott has here, and he employs typical Ellington coloring, dynamics, phrasings, etc., plus some fancy trumpeting in imitation of the departed Cootie. *Petite* is a more conventional, more typically Raymond Scott concoction.

AAA—*Chips Boogie Woogie*, and *Chips Blues*. Woody Herman's Four Chips. Decca 3577.

● *Chips Boogie Woogie* appears to us to be one of the most successful small-combination boogie-woogies yet turned out. A major share of the effectiveness stems from the strictly first-rate piano work of Tommy Lineham; but every member of the group is tops, and Herman's own clarinet is, as always, very effective. The opposite side is another of the Herman blues, and a good one, too. Herman here contributes some swell vocalizing.

AAA—*Oh! Look at Me Now*, and *You Might Have Belonged to Another*. Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Victor 27274.

● These are the two prize-winners in the recent amateur song-writers' contest sponsored by Dorsey on the air. *Oh! Look at Me Now*, the more attractive of the two, is the product of Johnny de Vries, New York advertising artist and "hot" enthusiast. It's a sprightly, cleverly constructed number that Dorsey, with the help of Frank Sinatra and his fine vocal group, the Pied Pipers, treats to a really bang-up performance.

AAA—*Between Friends*, and *People Like You*. Ted Straeter and his Orchestra. Columbia 35873.

● Very smooth performances by the best of the society bands. *Between Friends* utilizes a vocal group much in the manner of Dorsey's Pied Pipers, and with great effectiveness. Straeter is musician enough in all he does to avoid the banalities of his fellow society pets, Eddie Duchin and Emil Petty. Therefore, it's always a pleasure to listen to him. Besides being a pianist who knows his way around the keys, he orchestrates with taste and originality.

AAA—*It All Comes Back to Me Now*, and *The Old Folop*. Eddie Duchin and his Orchestra. Columbia 35867.

● Of all the tunes that have emerged from the BMI tune factory, *It All Comes Back to Me Now* seems to be the most appealing. Written by Joan Whitney, erstwhile chorine, it has a rather haunting tune and plenty of sentimental wallop in the lyrics. Duchin's treatment is characteristically heavy-handed, but does not obscure the qualities of this really fine song.

OTHER CURRENT POPULAR RECORDINGS OF MERIT

AAA—*Sultan Serenade*, and *Turkey Special*. Horace Henders and his Orchestra. Okeh 6026.

AAA—*Keep Cool*, *Fool*, and *No Use Squawkin'*. Erskine Hawkins and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11049.

AAA—*Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*, and *Bounce Me Brother with a Solid Four*. Woody Herman and his Orchestra. Decca 3617.

AAA—*Who*, and *Full Dress Hop*. Gene Krupa and his Orchestra. Okeh 6009.

AAA—*Pale Moon*, and *Hep-Tee-Hootie*. Tony Pastor and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11040.

AAA—*Anapola*, and *Donna Maria*. Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Decca 8526.

AAA—*Wee Baby Blues*, and *Battery Bounce*. Art Tatum and his Band. Decca 8526.

AAA—*Rocking the Blues*, and *Volcano*. Count Basie and his Orchestra. Okeh 6010.

AA—*Good-for-Nothin' Joe*, and *Charleston Alley*. Charlie Barnet and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11037.

AA—*Song of the Volga Boatmen*, and *Chapel in the Valley*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11029.

AA—*Boogie Woogie Sugar Blues*, and *The Last Kiss You Gave Me*. Benny Carter and his Orchestra. Decca 3588.

AA—*Are You All Reet?*, and *Cupid's Nightmare*. Cab Calloway and his Orchestra. Okeh 6035.

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